

AN
APPEAL
TO
COMMON SENSE
IN BEHALF OF
RELIGION.

By the Rev. JAMES OSWALD, D. D.

THE SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:

Printed by J. HUGHS;

And sold by J. WILKIE, in St. Paul's Church-Yard.

M DCC LXVIII.



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AN
APPEAL
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BOOK I.

Mankind in all ages have paid too little regard to the authority of Common Sense.

INTRODUCTION.

WHETHER credulity or scepticism in excess, is the more shameful or more dangerous folly, may bear dispute. But that both are weaknesses of pernicious consequence, to which the human mind is liable,

ble, and against which it ought to be guarded with care, will easily be allowed. Both extremes have prevailed in their turn, and operated their effects among us to a degree that demands our attention. In former ages, credulity was the reigning folly; and misled, not only vulgar minds, but in some degree also the learned and judicious. In our own times, scepticism hath been in such vogue, that scarce any are ashamed of it; many glory in it; and not a few, distinguished by good sense and probity, are tainted with it, to a degree that is hardly consistent with their character. The distractions of the preceding age gave full proof of the mischief of one extreme; and that intemperate love of pleasure, that prostitution of conscience, and dissoluteness of manners, which are the natural consequences of the other, gave, in our own times, so general and just an alarm, and seemed so plainly to portend some dismal catastrophe, that, with astonishment equal to our joy, we may look back upon the
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the escape we have so lately and so happily made.

By a singular unanimity in our councils, a vigor and steadiness in our measures, a disinterested zeal for national glory and happiness, seconded by the ardor and intrepidity of our land and sea forces, and attended with a train of successes exceeding our most sanguine expectations, hath Almighty God rescued these nations from impending disgrace and ruin, and raised them to an envied pitch of glory and prosperity.

An interposition so gracious and signal, by means so desirable and unexpected, must go deep with many, and make some impression on the least sensible hearts, sufficient, if not to win them over to the practice of religion, at least to dispose them to take their obligations to God into consideration. And it may be expected of a people who, with all their faults and foibles, are allowed an uncommon share of good sense and ingenuity, that, dismissing sophistical reasonings, and evasions of every kind, they will judge with care and

candor of a subject, which if at all found worthy of our notice, claims the highest regard, and the deepest attention.

To with-hold our assent from doubtful propositions, and to be slow and cautious in admitting truths made out by an art so nice and fallacious as that of abstract reasoning, is prudent: But to hesitate about truths of which one cannot entertain a serious doubt, without the imputation of folly or madness, is an abuse of our faculties so opposite to our national character, as must be resolved into the mode of the times, and cannot be supposed of long continuance. Would a kind Providence add to the singular endowments of his present Majesty the blessing of a long and prosperous reign, we might reasonably hope, that a little further inquiry, under his paternal care and countenance, would so effectually explode all nonsense of the religious and irreligious kind, that posterity would treat our much admired argumentations on those subjects with the same contempt we now bestow on the jargon of the schools, or those

those rants of visionaries which passed current in former ages :

*We think our fathers fools, so wise we grow:
Our wiser sons, no doubt, will think us so.*

POPE.

The truth of religion, both natural and revealed, hath, for a century past, been considered by friends and adversaries as a proper subject of disputation. A variety of objections have been offered by men of wit and genius, and a variety of answers have been made by those of high reputation for piety and learning. The attention of the public has been fully engaged; and multitudes, as might be expected, of different ranks, seem to hold themselves in suspense, waiting the issue of the debate.

For this evil no remedy hath yet been found. But we are not therefore to conclude it irremediable. Perhaps the great truths of religion have not been put in a proper light. Perhaps the light in which they have been offered is highly improper. Ought truths in which all mankind are e-

qually interested, to be made questions among the learned, and as such subjected to the canvassing of subtile reasoning? Will subtile reasoning give satisfaction to men of sense, on a subject so interesting and important? or can they, by a careful survey of the debate, and by weighing arguments on both sides, arrive at that full, steady, and permanent belief, which is due to truths of such consequence? And should men of thought and leisure be able to trace them by a thread of fine-spun reasoning to the testimony of sense, or the axioms of the schools, and be willing to rest in the satisfaction they give themselves in this way, what shall become of multitudes who have neither leisure, nor capacity, nor inclination, to pursue the same course? They must remain in suspense, or believe without evidence, or be furnished with evidence of a different and superior kind, even that which all above nonage can comprehend, and none but idiots and madmen will reject.

That the obligations of religion and virtue should be attended with the highest

est evidence, and that mankind should have as much satisfaction concerning that religious and virtuous conduct on which their happiness depends, as they have for any prudent and just conduct of any other kind, and indeed a great deal more, is consonant to all the ideas we have of the attributes of God, and the perfection of his works. We see with amazement and delight, that every spring and wheel of the vast system we inhabit, moves with exactness, and performs its office in the utmost perfection; and shall we suppose an essential defect in beings of the highest order? The brutes fulfill the part assigned them in the creation of God, under the direction of an instinct that is next to infallible; and are men supposed to act at random? Men have sufficient direction, if attended to, in the duties of civil and social life; and shall we suppose them left by their wise creator to act by no direction, or by an uncertain direction, in the most important duties, those respecting him on whom they absolutely depend? It is easier to

suppose, that all the learned of ancient and modern times should have overlooked or mistaken the criterion of truth, than to suppose that there is no such criterion, or that it is not obvious to every man of sound understanding.

The human mind hath a power of pronouncing, at first sight, on obvious truth, with a quickness, clearness, and indubitable certainty, similar, if not equal, to the information conveyed by the external organs of sense. Its exercise begins in children with the first dawn of rationality, and not till then ; and is ever after enjoyed in some degree by learned and unlearned, and by every individual of the human kind, who is not an idiot, or some how disordered in his intellects ; affording an almost infallible direction in the whole conduct of their lives ; and was intended by the author of our being for giving us entire satisfaction concerning all primary truths, those of religion in particular : and our not having recourse to that power, is the true cause of those idle disputes which
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have been maintained of late about the truth of religion.

It is the well known practice of wise men in all ages, and in none more than in the present, to relieve themselves from perplexities arising from idle debates, by an appeal to common sense. Being aware of the errors to which we are liable, and the artifices practised in deducing one truth from another, they have entertained a just distrust of reasoning, especially of laborious and subtle reasoning; and observing, on the other hand, certain simple perceptions of truth, which may be depended on, and to which all who are not downright idiots, or disordered in their faculties, do readily agree, they have recourse to the authority of these perceptions, as an undoubted standard of truth; and it will be difficult to assign a good reason, why the learned have not taken the same course in their controversies about religion.

Occasional appeals are frequently made to common sense in behalf of particular truths. But no great forwardness hath yet

yet appeared, in the friends of religion, to trust the whole cause to that decision, though they might with safety. Common sense, it is like, will make great havoc of theological opinions, but cannot hurt religion. If it contracts the system one way, it will enlarge it another; and give it, on the whole, a solidity and stability which it cannot obtain from the refinements of the learned.

In the defences of religion hitherto offered, great stress is laid on candor in judging. But when do we see disputes about religion brought to an issue by means of this virtue? And how seldom do we find this much talked of candor among disputants of any kind? If in well-regulated societies we meet with as much regard to truth and justice as is necessary for the commerce of life, it is well. But that impartiality of judgment which enables one to see, and own, and renounce his errors, and embrace the opposite truth, is very rare. You shall find fifty bigots, of all denominations, for one freethinker of this kind. Through pride, or shame,
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or fear, or through the mere force of habit, men cleave to the opinions they have once espoused, and will not give them up whilst they can maintain them, and will endeavour to maintain them as long as they have the colour of reason to keep them in countenance. There is therefore a necessity for the interposal of authority; not of the civil magistrate, for that is improper and dangerous; but of that power of the human mind, which is supreme, and whose decision none will dare to reject. Many scruple not to use all the arts of sophistry in reasoning, who would be abashed and overawed by the authority of common sense.

These nations were formerly over-run with a folly of the religious kind, which baffled, and would for ever have baffled, the labours of the learned, but fell before common sense. And (be the fate of this appeal what it will) whenever scepticism and infidelity, the reigning folly of the present age, is brought to this trial, it will fall into contempt, and disappear.

A formal appeal to common sense may,
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with great appearance of reason, be construed into an affront; but is, on some occasions, unavoidable. If your adversary errs through his ignorance or mistake of facts, you may set him right, by pointing out the fact which he knows not or hath overlooked. If he hath mistaken any of the essential rules of reasoning, you ought to point out and explain the rule he hath transgressed. But if he hath the boldness to question the truth of first principles, or to substitute chimera's instead of principles, you must necessarily appeal to common sense. And if you do so, you must show him how far he deviates from the standard appealed to; that is, in other words, you must convict him of nonsense. The harsh expression may, and ought to be avoided; but the idea conveyed by it must be kept in view. Without that you do nothing. Your appeal will be found frivolous and unjust.

When zeal for religion was in high fermentation, its advocates thought themselves privileged to treat their opponents with indignity and outrage. But an opposite

posite spirit hath produced an opposite conduct. The most frivolous, absurd, and pernicious conceits of pretended free-thinkers, have, for some time past, been treated with all the delicacy, indeed with all the deference, due to discoveries of value. Which of the two extremes is most faulty, may not be easy to determine. But sure there is a decency and dignity of manner due to all subjects of importance. Why should good manners be sacrificed to zeal, or zeal to good manners? May not one preserve all the respect due to the rank an author holds in civil life, or in the republic of letters, while he exposes, at the same time, the absurdity of his opinions? or, if that is necessary, while he treats them with all the contempt or indignation to which they are justly intitled.

There is no satisfying the demands of false delicacy, because they are not regulated by any fixed standard. But a man of candor and judgment will allow, that the bashful timidity practised by those who put themselves on a level with
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the adversaries of religion, would ill become one who, declining all disputes, asserts primary truths on the authority of common sense; and that whoever pleads the cause of religion this way, hath a right to assume a firmer tone, and to pronounce with a more decisive air, not upon the strength of his own judgment, but on the reverence due from all mankind to the tribunal to which he appeals.

It may appear strange, that so much trouble must be taken in making people acquainted with common sense, or in reconciling them to its authority. But, in fact, the plainest things are often least understood, because they are least attended to. The path of common sense is indeed so open and obvious, that a child, one would think, could hardly mistake it. But it has been mistaken by those of good understanding, in the prosecution of their civil as well as religious interests; and when, through heedlessness, precipitancy, or presumptuous curiosity, people have got into devious tracks, they are not easily recalled. Unwilling to think
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they could be so grossly misled, and inflamed rather than discouraged by difficulties or dangers, they have an ardor to push forward, with an extreme aversion to go back on their footsteps to where they first set out.

You may perhaps convince your friend that he hath made one or more false steps; but to make him own that he is out in his whole course, is a task of another kind. The first may be accomplished by a certain number of arguments; but the other is a work of time, and labour, and patience.

In the church of Rome, there are errors of different kinds; some that offend against the laws of just reasoning, others that are in direct contradiction to the fundamental principles of all knowledge. To reclaim the votaries of that church from errors of either kind, may be difficult; but the difficulty with respect to the last, though apparently less, is by much the greatest. However easy it may be to set the absurdity of their opinions in its proper light, it will not be easy to

make them see that absurdity. They cannot conceive, that opinions they have so long entertained with so great reverence, and which have had the countenance of so many great names, should be absurd. Or should a glimpse of the truth break in upon them, should they find an inclination to yield to its evidence, or even actually yield, the habit of thinking they have so long indulged, will be apt to return, and make them revolt. The obvious truth, therefore, with its opposite absurdity, must be set full in their view; it must be brought again and again into view, until the mind, being made familiarly acquainted with it, begins to feel its force.

All that is contained in this essay might no doubt be drawn into a much narrower compass; but it is a question whether the extent given it will be sufficient for the end proposed. However paradoxical, in appearance, yet it is certain, that good sense, which Mr. Pope with great truth declares to be worth the seven sciences, is a species of knowledge

ledge of difficult attainment. It is indeed the gift of Heaven, but needs to be stirred up; and hath been so long and universally neglected, that, to give it full exercise, requires more attention and application of thought than most people are willing to bestow. Every smatterer in science takes it for granted, that he is possessed of the principles of good sense; but, on trial, the greatest adepts will hardly admit them. They are in truth so plain, that, to illustrate and inculcate them, is to tire the patience, and affront the judgment of the reader; but, at the same time, so diametrically opposite to received opinions, and established maxims, that, barely to propose, or even to state them with perspicuity, without unfolding and inculcating them with due care, would be to encourage that superficial way of judging, which is the source of all our errors.

A certain brilliancy of thought, and pretty conciseness of expression, might be fit enough to surprise and delight the mind with transient glimpses of truth;

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but is by no means fit to convey that full and permanent conviction which is due to truths of the first rank. The mind must be allowed to judge of them with impartiality and coolness, proceeding not upon sentiments suddenly raised by striking views of truth, but on a deliberate judgment formed by a familiar acquaintance with the object: and in order thereto, the same truths must be presented again and again, with no great variation, and with as little adventitious ornament as possible. This manner of treating the subject, may disappoint us of the attention of some whose assent and approbation we should otherwise value: but we trust the merits of the cause to judges of manly sense, who can with patience and pleasure entertain themselves with the steady view of obvious and interesting truth.

There have been in former ages, and are no doubt in the present, a few blessed with a discernment which sets them above the fooleries of false learning, who may be disgusted with the minute discussions

cussions we must sometimes enter into, in confutation of manifest absurdities. But they will be pleased to consider, that, of late, the utmost subtilty of reasoning hath been employed to invalidate the most obvious and important truths: and these reasonings, however manifestly absurd, are founded on the philosophical hypothesis in vogue, and cannot be fairly confuted without exposing the falsties in philosophy which give them support: nor can this be done, without entering into discussions more minute, and indeed more frivolous than were otherwise to be wished. When learning hath attained to a greater degree of perfection, and the authority of common sense is universally acknowledged and submitted to, the friends of religion will be released from this disagreeable task. In the mean time, it will be expected of those of superior understanding, that they will bear with that treatment of the subject which the present state of learning makes necessary. They, on the other hand, who, by their education, their company, or

turn of mind, have been involved in those doubts which always attend subtile refinements on obvious truths, must not stop their inquiry till they have got a standard of truth in which a wise man can rest. Partial inquiries are as unsafe as they are unfair. People ought therefore to forbear philosophising altogether, or to pursue their inquiries to their due length. They must at least be qualified to distinguish exactly between primary and secondary truths, and the different evidence belonging to each. They must also look into the human mind with some care, and get acquainted with that power which is characteristical of rationality, and in whose decision every one who would not be thought a fool or a madman must acquiesce. And, above all, they must proceed in their inquiries as becomes men of sense and probity, and give at least as fair a hearing to the friends as to the adversaries of religion.

Many discover great anxiety about their obligations to inferior beings, with a strange unconcernedness about the obligations

ligations of gratitude and justice they are under to the supreme: As, on the other hand, many are scrupulous about their obligations to God, who show little concern about what they owe to mankind. Nor is it difficult to account for this inconsistency. But a man of sense and probity cannot be unconcerned about any obligations he supposes himself under to any being whatever. If ignorant, he is desirous of information; if doubtful, he inquires with care; nor will he stop his inquiries till he has got all the satisfaction he has reason to expect. To take advantage of dark surmises, or doubtful reasoning, to elude obligations of any kind, is always looked upon as an indication of a dishonest heart in all other matters; and why it should not be considered in the same light with respect to religion, cannot easily be accounted for.

Many, it is true, are too much ingrossed by the cares and pleasures of life, to interest themselves deeply in a concern so foreign to their views. Others will be shy of entering upon an inquiry which

they foresee will give them disturbance in their unlawful pursuits. Some sensible persons also have, by a habit of reading and speaking on all subjects, without thinking, disqualified themselves in a great measure from forming a true judgment of any. But some may be found who can, and will judge.

It were strange, if, from curiosity itself, there should not be multitudes fond of examining a subject wherein all are so much interested, and about which so few are agreed. Many who do not enter into those vexatious disputes which have been agitated about religion, may be willing to take this method of looking into religion itself. The friends of religion can have no exceptions to an appeal which must, in the issue, redound to its credit and interest. And of those who would seem to be above all such concerns, there are numbers not altogether so regardless of religion as they affect to appear.

A certain obscure indeterminate idea of religion haunts the minds of the irreligious,

gious, which they would do well to examine. For, if it is a phantom, an illusion of the brain, they may, by a manly inquiry, and fair discussion, dismiss it from their thoughts. But if it is a reality, an important reality, founded, not in the crazed imaginations of enthusiasts, but in the nature of things, and derived, not from cunning politicians, but from common sense, all endeavours to elude its obligations are no less silly than wicked.

In vain do we assume airs of freedom and independence, incompatible with our very existence; in vain do we affect an ignorance or scepticism, which neither is, nor can be real; and in vain do we amuse ourselves with idle talk or sophistical arguing against religion, when, at bottom, there is a conviction, or but a suspicion of its reality. In matters of such consequence, one ought to have the courage to know the truth, and the honesty to avow it.

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CHAPTER I.

Learned and unlearned have a strong propensity to pursue far-fetched discoveries, to the neglect of truths more obvious and useful.

THE whole stock of human knowledge arises from the exercise of these three powers of the human mind, perception, judgment, and reasoning. By simple perception we are informed of that variety of beings, with their obvious qualities which fall within our sphere; as by a perception equally simple we get the knowledge or consciousness of our own existence, and obvious qualities and powers. By a simple act of judgment we pronounce immediately upon all the obvious relations of those beings which are the objects of perception, their relations to one another, and the relation they bear to us. By the power of reasoning we investigate qualities and relations of being which are not the immediate

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diate objects of perception and judgment, by deducing them from those which are. Such then are the powers wherewith mankind are furnished for supplying them with useful knowledge. Let us now see how they employ these powers.

For the exercise of the two first of our intellectual powers, nature hath opened a large field of useful knowledge, and such as may be depended on in the conduct of life. If the object is viewed at a proper distance, and there happens to be no casual disorder or defect in the powers, the observations we make, and the judgment we pronounce, by the simple acts of perception and judgment, are almost infallible; and by treasuring up these in our memories, (were we as diligent in collecting and recording them as we ought to be), we should be plentifully provided with excellent materials for all the ordinary occasions of life. But unhappily we do not chuse this plain, easy, certain road to wisdom which nature hath pointed out. Overlooking many important discoveries which offer themselves to our observation,

observation, we run eagerly in pursuit of distant, obscure, and often insignificant knowledge. Through a too great fondness of cultivating and employing our reasoning powers, we forget to give full exercise to the simple powers of perception and judgment; which proves one of the chief sources of the ignorance, the mistakes, and the follies of mankind. This will appear in a surprising light, by taking a short survey of the ways of men, both learned and unlearned.

The writers on logic, whose province it is to direct and assist mankind in the exercise of their intellectual powers, have contributed not a little to mislead them. After stating and defining the two first, they immediately pass on to the third power, and give copious and minute directions about its proper exercise; as if reasoning were the chief source of knowledge, and the great business of a rational being. Little care is had to guard the mind against indolence, inattention, inaccuracy of observation, rashness, precipitancy of judgment, and that variety of
deceptions

deceptions which arise from prepossession, prejudice, passion, and innumerable biases to which the human mind is subject. The main design with most of those writers is, to form an acute reasoner, and able disputant, with little regard to the acquisition of that useful and necessary accomplishment called *good sense*.

From this wrong direction in the outset, have all the learned almost pursued a false track of knowledge. Though the whole of nature lies exposed to their view, the collection they have made of useful truth is small, in comparison of what might reasonably be expected from their application and industry. Many of the best written books are full of trains of reasoning, of laborious reasoning, with but here and there a discovery of consequence. We meet with opinions, and systems of opinions, various, opposite, and contradictory, with a great variety of arguments, objections, and confutations, and but few of those indubitable maxims on which a wise man would chuse to found his conduct.

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Setting aside the doctrines of natural philosophy, which are founded upon repeated experiment and observation, or upon a species of reasoning equally to be depended on, the useful and undoubted truths to be gathered from all the other sciences, bear no proportion to the dubious positions, and conjectural reasonings in support of these positions, with which the writings of the learned abound. So true is this observation, that one may go through the circle of science without being able to pick up as much information as would be sufficient for his conducting himself with propriety in any station of life.

Now, is there not here a just ground of complaint? Is not this the reason why the sciences are in so little reputation with men of business, and why the schools are so early forsaken by those who are designed for the highest and most important trusts?

There is perhaps too much ground to complain of the narrow views and low turn of mind that sometimes appear in
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men of rank and power. But they, in their turn, have just ground to complain of the learned. Learning, say they, may be of use to give an opening to the minds of young people, and to put their faculties into exercise; but not to form their manners, or regulate their conduct. Young people, say they, must not be kept too long in the schools, lest they contract habits of thinking that are opposite, or foreign at least, to common practice. They are therefore dispatched to another, perhaps a necessary, but a very dangerous school, the world, where they may get acquainted with men and things. And it is well, if by seeing objects with their own eyes, and by the due exercise of the simple powers of perception and judgment, they collect a system of obvious and undoubted truths, by the knowledge of which they may steer their course with safety. Thus have the learned disappointed the world of that benefit they had a title to expect from their labours, and brought the sciences into some degree of contempt, by employing themselves

felves chiefly in doubtful researches into distant and obscure truths, to the neglect of those more easily attained, more certain and useful.

The folly of overlooking obvious and certain truths, and running eagerly in pursuit of those more remote and uncertain, is not peculiar to the learned. It is the foible of human nature, and discovers itself in all the arts, the most necessary, the most common, and in the lowest occupations, as well as in the sciences. Do husbandmen, artificers, and those who are employed in the several branches of trade, give due attention to the various methods of improving and enlarging the branches of business in which they are engaged, those methods, I mean, which lie within their sphere, and offer themselves to observation? They do it just so far, and no farther than they are urged by necessity, or solicited by the near prospect of great gain. Beyond that they seldom go; but hold on, with little variation, the track into which they were first put, till their curiosity is awakened
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by some far-fetched discovery of some bold adventurer, who often engages all the men of enterprize in rash and dangerous exploits.

A new system of husbandry founded on a few experiments, perhaps on conjecture, a curious machine of a new and singular construction, a project in politics or trade of plausible appearance, however ill supported, will catch hold of the minds of many, and engage all their activity, whilst numberless real solid methods of improvement on all these subjects, which lie open to every one's observation, and stare them, as it were, in the face, are overlooked.

One cannot easily conceive the height to which improvements in agriculture, and in all kinds of manufacture, might be carried, if all employed about them, who have the understanding common to rational beings, turned their attention to the subjects they work upon, and the instruments by which they carry on their work. In husbandry, for instance, if due attention was given to the difference
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of soil, the difference of culture, and the different returns from both; in manufactures, if the different materials and different machines employed in working them up, came under consideration, and if what is obviously right and obviously wrong, obviously defective, and easily and obviously capable of amendment or improvement, were looked into by those concerned about them with any degree of that care and exactness which a botanist employs on plants and flowers, there could be no bounds to the most valuable improvements in these necessary arts. In like manner, if all who are engaged in trade would take that branch or those branches in which they are concerned, under a careful inspection, attending to their course, carefully marking the causes of their obstructions, and thus discovering by what supplies they may be continued, by what expedients they may be relieved, and by what change of direction they may run with a more free and plentiful current; — if, instead of a few hints from those of uncommon acuteness,

acuteness, every individual would contribute such improvements as do occur, or, with a little attention, might occur, in the course of his business; then the trade of a country, like a river fed by an innumerable multitude of secret springs, would gradually rise and swell to a height beyond what it could reach by the supply of a few bold streams.

If men of business will reflect upon the above-mentioned well-known truths, (and they ought not to be slightly passed over), they will find, that they have no right to reproach the learned for the little proficiency they make in useful knowledge; because the folly of overlooking the most valuable and most evident truths is not confined to any class of men, but prevails universally, and, as has been already observed, is indeed the foible of human nature. No doubt, discoveries and improvements in the arts and in the sciences are gradually carried on by those engaged in them, but not in proportion to what might be expected from a right application of the powers of understand-

ing with which we are furnished. The misfortune is, that we put no value even upon interesting truths which are within our reach, and cannot resist the curiosity of knowing those which are not.

These observations are made with no intention of decrying the use of reasoning, which, in many cases, cannot be dispensed with, but of recommending the due exercise of other intellectual powers of equal use and necessity. That discoveries are made in the arts and sciences by reasoning, will not be denied : but that discoveries more numerous, more useful, and more certain, may be made in both by a judicious attention to the operations of nature, cannot be doubted. How greatly has natural philosophy been improved and enlarged, by learned men giving up conjectures and doubtful reasonings upon assumed principles, and bending their whole application to the observation of the known phenomena? The art of medicine also hath been rendered more solid and useful, by physicians paying less regard than formerly

merly to plausible hypotheses, formed by deduction from general principles, and proceeding wholly upon evident symptoms or undoubted truths resulting necessarily from well-known facts. And what a pity is it, that moral philosophy and theology do not undergo the same treatment?

It is no easy task to determine the preference in favour of one or other of the many different hypotheses of virtue devised by divines and philosophers in the present age; nor is it easy to say how far the interest of virtue is concerned in the decision: but one may safely affirm, that if the penetration and compass of thought which appear in these works, had been employed in a careful survey of the human mind, its sentiments, affections, propensities, and powers, its sound and sickly state, with a just reference to the obvious duties of life, the world would have been furnished with a system of ethics more complete, more easily comprehended, and much better adapted to com-

mon use, than any that can be produced by abstract reasoning.

What genius, learning, and zeal have been employed, and how many volumes written, in the explication of doctrines that are utterly inexplicable, and in fathoming depths of theology which far exceed the line of human understanding, which would have been much more properly and profitably employed in pointing out the true path to happiness, and warning mankind against the various and manifold delusions to which they are liable? Not that profound researches of the critical or philosophical kind are altogether to be condemned. They have their use, and are in some degree necessary. But why should divines of distinguished ability bestow their labours upon these less profitable, though more curious inquiries, to the neglect of that immense treasure of divine and moral truth which is level to every capacity, commends itself to every man's conscience, touches every spring of action, and, when reduced to just order, and clearly set forth,

would make a system so complete, so beautiful, and so grand, as to confound, if not for ever to silence, the adversaries of religion, and give, at the same time, the highest satisfaction to good men;—a joy and satisfaction the same in kind, though not in degree, with what they shall experience when they come into the immediate presence of God! That this ought to be the chief concern of Christian divines, those especially of superior capacity, will not be denied; but that it is, cannot be affirmed.

These nations have been blessed with a succession of divines, who, in solid learning, manly sense, and sober piety, are not inferior to any who have adorned the Christian church. But in their pursuit of truth, they have been much retarded by thorny questions, and perplexing disputes, into which they have been inveigled through some remains of that science, falsely so called, against which they all with one voice declare, but with the love of which they are in some degree tainted, and against which it is difficult to guard

the minds of the learned. They have, like our moral philosophers, (and with quicker steps than they), been quitting jejune speculations and doubtful disputations, and turning their attention by degrees to obvious and important truths. But to reach clear, full, and steady views of that great system which shines forth from the face of nature and of the scriptures, must, it seems, be a work of time.

Of late hath appeared a genius of surprising splendor and amazing force; who, keeping within the bounds of common sense, sets forth the truth, the excellence, the beauty, and majestic grandeur of the Christian plan, on the one hand, with the futile conceits of its adversaries, on the other, in a light which must give high satisfaction to all the friends of religion, and indeed to every friend of science. We have the pleasure also to see, and, with gratitude to Providence, ought to look up to, another great man, whose spirit and station bring to mind the poet's picture of the Chinese philosopher:

Superior

*Superior and alone Confucius stood,
Who taught the only science, to be good.*

From these events, with other favourable prognostics which have of late appeared among us, we may hope, that the prevalence of true religion, with the extinction of nonsense both of the religious and irreligious kind, may not be far off. But we must not anticipate the course of things by too forward and sanguine expectations; for, in reaching this most desirable end, we have the inbred folly of human nature to contend with.

As arts and sciences approach to maturity, subtle reasonings and far-fetched discoveries are less relied on, and the plain decisions of common sense come into reputation. Having been often deceived by plausible schemes in business and science, formed by nice deductions from general principles, we gradually incline to found our opinions and practices upon the more solid bottom of observation and experience, and find ourselves more and more disposed to embrace that

simple plan of conduct which we formerly overlooked. But as, in eloquence, a true taste is requisite to our renouncing the bombast for the irresistible language of nature, so must we be well advanced in true wisdom, to dispense with the refinements of reasoning on obvious subjects, and acquiesce in those primary truths of nature, which, having no occasion for foreign proof, enter the mind with the same ease, and with an evidence of the same kind, with which light enters the eye.

Just as the vulgar pass over what is plain and useful, to puzzle themselves with dark passages of scripture in which they have little concern; and as our young gentry, overlooking the police, the manners, and even the geography of their own country, run abroad to make cursory remarks on the singularities of foreign nations; and as all idle people enter more keenly into the politics of Europe, than into the government of their families, or the management of their own affairs; so do the generality of mankind,
men

Ch. II. COMMON SENSE. 41

men of business, and men of letters, make light of interesting, obvious, and undoubted truths, which are objects of simple perception and judgment, through an ungoverned ambition of employing their reasoning powers in discoveries of no real use, and unsupported by any solid evidence. The folly is ingrained and inveterate, breaks out on all occasions, in every class of men, and in all ages and nations.

C H A P. II.

The sages of antiquity neglected obvious truths of the greatest moment to the interests of virtue, through an absurd inclination to employ their reasoning powers on improper subjects.

WE admire the wise men of Greece and Rome : and with reason ; for on many accounts they are worthy of high esteem. They were men of great industry and ability, animated with a laudable zeal for knowledge ; and, bating the folly

folly so common to mankind, of relying more upon reasoning, than simple perception of primary truths, were intitled to the character of *wise*, but so far gone in that folly, as disqualified them for being guides to others in what may be called the first philosophy.

That the Epicurean scheme was no other than Atheism disguised; that the hypothesis of the Stoics was little different from the Polytheism of the vulgar; and that the faith of the Academics was either none at all, or faint and fluctuating at best, will not be disputed by those who have any knowledge of antiquity. If you will judge of their sentiments by occasional sayings with which modern philosophers were wont to embellish their works, you may believe, as many have done, that ancient philosophers were possessed of the whole system of natural religion. But look into their writings, and you will be undeceived. Or if you will take the testimony of one of the most considerable among them, who had made their doctrines his study, you will be told,
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that the being and providence of God was, of all other subjects, a matter of the greatest doubt and disputation among philosophers. Now, how came men of such capacity and judgment to hesitate about so evident a truth? The answer is plainly this. They would not pronounce upon it as men of sense, but as philosophers. They would not rest in the testimony which the phænomena of nature bear to this great truth, but, by a process of reasoning, would needs make out a strict proof of what is too evident to admit of any; and failing in the attempt, they fell into great perplexity, confusion, and doubt. Let Cicero's dialogues concerning the nature of the gods, stript of rhetorical embellishments, and reduced to simple propositions, be put into the hands of some peasant of common understanding, and tolerably acquainted with the Christian revelation, and he will be much astonished at the opinions of the ancients, the gross stupidity of the Epicureans, the frivolous superstition of the Stoics, and the presumptuous rashness of the Academics,

mics, and heartily thank his God for bestowing on him the gift of common sense, and of the holy scriptures.

Even they who retained the belief of Deity, did not, and, according to the notions they entertained of his government, could not, come to God as a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. They considered him as the model of all perfection, and the proper object of imitation, and also regarded his will as the standard of rectitude; and on all these subjects thought and wrote sublimely. But their ideas of moral government were so refined, so faint, and involved in such uncertainty, that they found it necessary to place their chief confidence in their own virtue, and the consequences flowing necessarily from it in the natural course of things. It is worthy of notice, that in all their disputes about the chief good, and deep researches into happiness, there is no stress laid upon those rewards and punishments that may reasonably be expected under a wise, a gracious, and just administration. These considerations, which

which always had place with the vulgar, are seldom or never to be found in the writings of philosophers. The expectation is just, and consonant to the sentiments of the rational mind; but common sense was not the standard of philosophy.

They were not ignorant that the system of nature was upheld and conducted by a being of absolute perfection, whom they were bound to regard as their rightful sovereign, and to whom, of course, they were accountable for all their actions, and from whom they might therefore expect an exact retribution, if not in the present, yet in some future state of existence. But they seemed to be doubtful, whether he actually would call mankind to account. They could not doubt, that the power, wisdom, and goodness, which had hitherto maintained their existence, and continued them the same identical persons, amidst a variety of changes and chances, could do so in time to come, under all the revolutions of matter to which they might be subjected: but they were extremely curious
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to know with certainty whether he would actually do it. They had all reason to believe, that he who preserves every atom of matter with amazing care, would keep them in the full possession of all their rational powers, and place them in a state of happiness or misery suited to their character and conduct, and to the wise and just ends of his government : but this did not content them. Now, is this agreeable to common sense ?

The soldier does not ask a demonstration, whether, in the day of battle, he shall be crowned with victory, or covered with disgrace ; but, fearing the worst, and hoping the best, he minds his duty. The merchant does not want a demonstration concerning the returns of his trade. The husbandman cannot promise himself a plentiful crop, proportioned to his labour and industry. No man can assure himself, that he shall see another day. But every one minds his business as if he knew for certain that he would : And he would be thought a downright madman that acted otherwise. But nothing

thing will do with philosophers but demonstration.

Philosophers were not ignorant of the natural hopes and fears of the rational mind with regard to futurity, but did not think it incumbent on them, or perhaps thought it below the dignity of their profession, to lay hold on these handles. They gave way to an intemperate, and, I will say, an impertinent curiosity, of knowing, from data in nature, whether the human soul could survive the body; and not being able to give a full solution of this question, they imprudently neglected one of the most powerful restraints on vice, and incitements to virtue, of which the mind of man is capable.

That the world is upheld and conducted by a being of absolute perfection, is a truth to which all nature bears testimony: That this supreme being is our rightful sovereign and judge, cannot be doubted: That it is our wisdom, as it is our duty, to conduct ourselves so as we may be able to give him an account of
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all our actions ; and, That as he hath a right to call us to account, at what time and in what manner he sees fit, so it is our business, without farther inquiry, to hold ourselves in readiness, can as little be doubted. These are truths which philosophers ought and might have inculcated on mankind with great success. But they were diverted from it by that intemperate love of reasoning which is the foible of the human mind.

Had they, as became men of sense, employed the powers of understanding and elocution they were possessed of, in explaining and enforcing truths so consonant to the sentiments of the human heart, and so apt to operate upon it, they might have done eminent service to the world, supplied in some measure the want of revelation, and prepared and disposed the minds of men for its cordial reception. But engaged, as they were, in idle disputes and inexplicable difficulties, they lost authority with the bulk of mankind, and were of use only to the few who could relish their sublime speculations on
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the harmony of the universe, and supreme excellence of virtue, the only doctrine they thoroughly understood, or seemed firmly to believe.

Thus, by a misapplication of the intellectual powers, were the leaders of mankind bewildered, and the multitude left exposed to the practices of every cunning impostor, and plunged by degrees into abominable vices, accompanied with and countenanced by the most horrid rites of superstition.

Must now the same folly be acted over again? Shall we, under pretence of uncommon acuteness, maintain a dispute about obvious and interesting truths, (for that is the visible drift of modern freethinking), and thereby involve ourselves in the same mists of ignorance, error, and uncertainty, with ancient philosophers? or shall we, as becomes men of sense and probity, dismiss with contempt the frivolous surmises of sceptics, and steadily adhere to the natural sentiments of the rational soul, and to a revelation from God, which revives and confirms these sentiments?

C H A P. III.

Christian divines did, in contradiction to common sense, and to the detriment of religion, subject the most sacred and obvious truths, to the refinements of reasoning.

W H E N the world was bewildered, the vulgar by their prejudices, and the learned by refinements, and when an unusual flow of success and prosperity was about to extinguish in the minds of the great, all sense of religion and virtue, it pleased God to interpose in a manner unexpected and surprising. A light from heaven broke out at once upon the benighted nations. A revelation from God, vouched to the very senses of men, held up to view those sacred truths which had been long overlooked, or grossly perverted. Messengers were dispatched to the different nations, calling upon them to forsake their vices and impieties, and to return to God, who was willing to receive them to favour through the mediation of that

that divine person, who, having expiated their guilt by his death, hath ascended into heaven, to appear in the presence of God for them, and would assuredly return to judge the world, and to render to every man according to his deeds. To rouse the attention of mankind, and confirm their commission, these divine messengers were impowered to perform miraculous cures in the sight of all, and to raise the dead.

The attention of mankind was fully roused, their most scrupulous inquiries were satisfied, their prejudices were subdued, and multitudes in all corners of the world embraced the truth, and multitudes of all ages, and of both sexes, soon sealed the truth with their blood. The dreams of philosophy, with the fictions of poets, vanished; the temples of the idols were deserted; and all the nations of the then known world devoted themselves to the worship and obedience of the one true God, through the mediation of the one only Mediator between God and man.

But, alas! the folly of the human heart

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broke out anew. Not many ages had passed, when, neglecting the plain truths of God, men plunged into inscrutable subjects. They differed in their judgments; they disputed; they raged; and in the fury of their zeal, different sects denounced anathemas each against other, on account of their different conceptions of incomprehensible doctrines. They went on from age to age, neglecting what was useful and obvious, and prying curiously into hidden mysteries. And as learning declined, and floods of barbarians broke in upon them, they became in every age more ignorant, more foolish, and more wicked, till at last falling under the direction of crafty priests and interested statesmen, they were brought back almost, and had it not been for the written word of God, which they carefully preserved, however little they consulted it, they would have been brought altogether back, to the same grossness of ignorance, superstition, and vice, from which the Christian revelation had delivered them.

Upon consulting the sacred records,
and

and appealing to them, the one half of Christendom were made sensible of their folly, and shook off the dominion of ignorance and error. But as the truth had been long disguised, and the understandings of men debased and distorted by the influence of false learning, they could not all at once attain to just ideas of religion. They split again into sects, formed different creeds, and different plans of worship and government; and having been much exercised in subtile and hot disputes with the Romish doctors, they entered into contests of much the same kind, and in much the same spirit, with one another about their peculiar tenets.

Mean time a sect arose who called the whole in question; and believing themselves equally privileged with others to sound unfathomable depths, they employed the same subtilty of reasoning against religion, which contending divines had employed against each other. And the friends of religion, not aware of the consequence, did, partly through zeal for the truth, and partly from a habit of dis-

puting, and a confidence of victory, admit the whole to debate.

A controversy of course commenced about possible and impossible, fit and unfit, right and wrong, in the abstract; about the whole of the divine œconomy, what ought, and what ought not to be the measures of government with regard to free agents, and whether indeed there were any such; whether there is any essential difference between virtue and vice, and whence the difference arises; whether there is any occasion for a divine interposition in the concerns of religion; and whether the Deity can be supposed to favour any age or nation with any such interposition in preference to others.

Questions were moved, and controversies agitated, from which a pious heart would naturally shrink, and with which, common sense, if the minds of men had not been previously prepared for the entertainment, would be mightily shocked. No one had the hardiness to attempt a detection of imposture in the Christian revelation; but innuendos, suspicions, and
furnishes

surmises in abundance were thrown out; to all which, full and formal answers, replete with erudition, philological, philosophical, and theological, were offered to the public.

Not only the Christian revelation, but the moral perfections and moral government of God, yea, and the very being of virtue, have been made a subject of dispute. Freethinkers are not ashamed to publish their doubts concerning these realities; divines and philosophers have not disdained to establish them by a multiplicity of arguments. What is yet more to be regretted, the preachers of the gospel, forgetting the dignity of their character, and the design of their office, have condescended to plead the cause of religion in much the same manner as lawyers maintain a disputed right of property. Instead of awakening the natural sentiments of the human heart, and giving them a true direction, they have entered into reasonings about piety, justice, and benevolence, too profound to be fathomed by the multitude, and too subtle to

produce any considerable effect. Instead of setting forth the displays of divine perfection in the dispensation of the gospel, so admirably fitted to touch, to penetrate, and subdue the human mind, they have entertained their audiences with long and labour-ed proofs of a revelation from God, of which few have any serious doubt, and which no man can disbelieve in any consistency with common sense. May not this be called with great propriety, a throwing cold water on religion? and ought it not to be considered as one of the chief causes of that insensibility to all its concerns of which we so frequently complain? The multitude have been astonished, wise men have been ashamed, and good men grieved, at this treatment of religion, so much beneath its dignity.

B O O K II.

By setting aside the authority of common sense, modern philosophy gives occasion to universal scepticism.

C H A P. I.

According to the modern hypothesis, primary truths must be deduced from the testimony of sense, or the axioms of the schools, by trains of subtle reasoning.

WE ought to regard with due gratitude those who have reformed philosophy, and esteem them as the benefactors of mankind; but to remember at the same time, that, like the reformers of religion, they are not infallible, nor to be implicitly followed as if they were. Pretended freethinkers despise the bigotry of those who pay that reverence to theological systems of human composition which is due only to the

the doctrines of scripture, without adverting, that they themselves are often guilty of an equal, if not a much greater, weakness. They do not connect the salvation of their souls with a philosophical hypothesis, but are as tenacious of its dogmata, as shy of the least deviation from it, and as clamorous against innovators, as if they did. The bigotry they disavow concerns only a few exploded opinions ; and the freedom of thought on which they pique themselves, amounts to no more than a contempt of those opinions, with a firm attachment to the hypothesis in vogue.

To distinguish ourselves then from mere pretenders to freedom of thought, and to speak as becomes men of sense and probity, we must acknowledge, that Monsieur Descartes and Mr. Locke have done eminent service to the interest of learning, by banishing that jargon which disfigured and disgraced it ; but have not done what was incumbent on them to cure and correct that intemperate love of reasoning which may be called the epidemical

mical distemper of the human mind. They have, on the contrary, employed their authority and uncommon abilities to render it yet more powerful and prevalent. One casts about for a medium to prove his own existence; the other denies all practical principles; and both insist on the necessity of tracing the most obvious and indubitable truths to external or internal feeling, by the exercise of our discursive faculty.

“ I most sincerely value Monsieur Descartes,” says the learned and ingenious Abbé de Pluche; “ not indeed
“ on account of his being a Frenchman,
“ (for all men are my brethren), but because he is a very great genius; and
“ still more, because he was the first who
“ encouraged us to shake off the yoke of
“ Aristotle, and to look out for a better
“ method of pursuing sciences than that
“ which was followed heretofore. I
“ should have a far greater value for him,
“ if, after having convinced himself that
“ the beaten path leads to nothing, he
“ had not engaged in another road as
“ little

“ little sure, and perhaps more dan-
 “ gerous. The regard I owe to truth
 “ and my readers, obliges me here with
 “ candour to speak my mind of the me-
 “ thod of Descartes, and of his world,
 “ which is the product thereof. The read-
 “ er, from the exposition of his senti-
 “ ments, will be sensible that man was
 “ not born to argue in this manner.

“ Descartes, either from persuasion,
 “ or out of œconomy, began by doubt-
 “ ing of every thing. He was no longer
 “ certain whether there was the least
 “ thing about him, or whether he him-
 “ self existed. Then, making profound
 “ reflections on what passed within him,
 “ he became sensible that he was think-
 “ ing, whence he concluded that he ex-
 “ isted.”

“ After this important discovery, which
 “ gave him great satisfaction, and which
 “ he took care to maintain by a number
 “ of writings against any that should at-
 “ tempt to contradict him in that point,
 “ he went on farther, and found out,
 “ that he (Descartes) who was think-
 “ ing,

“ing, had likewise a body. This he
 “made himself sure of. Having gra-
 “dually convinced himself of the exist-
 “ence of his feet and hands, he philoso-
 “phically made use of them. By little
 “and little, and after repeated trials, he
 “next found, that there were some other
 “bodies around him. At first he would
 “not believe it. He must previously be
 “convinced of that; and he was very far
 “from thinking himself sure and fully
 “informed of it. How did he know but
 “he might be seduced by a dream?
 “God, or some powerful being, perhaps,
 “imposed upon him, by the appearances
 “of things that did not exist. From one
 “syllogism to another, from demonstra-
 “tion to demonstration, his argument
 “at last led him so far as to know flat
 “and plain, that he (Descartes) was
 “not asleep when he was awake, and
 “that God did not impose upon him by
 “fallacious appearances. He was so
 “transported with the evidence of these
 “new discoveries, and of the coherency
 “of his own ideas, that he, with all
 “speed,

“ speed, imparted them to all Europe,
 “ and thought himself authorised to refer
 “ the whole of philosophy to one sin-
 “ gle maxim, *viz.* Never to admit any
 “ thing but what we evidently conceive.
 “ Next to which he undertook to explain
 “ the system of the whole world, with-
 “ out admitting any thing therein that
 “ he did not conceive with the utmost
 “ evidence.

“ The first reflection that offers to the
 “ mind concerning this method, so much
 “ cried up, is, that there is no peasant,
 “ be he ever so stupid, but knows very
 “ well, without either method or medi-
 “ tation, that he exists; that he has a
 “ body; that there are other bodies a-
 “ bout him; that he is not asleep when
 “ he is awake; and that God, as he is
 “ good, does not make sport with him.
 “ If you dispute this peasant’s being very
 “ sure of his own thoughts concerning
 “ this, he will not retire to a solitude to
 “ prepare you a reply. He will laugh
 “ in the face of his antagonist, and not
 “ bate him an inch. Why then are
 “ these

“ these discoveries so lavishly exalted?
 “ Why must we be made to find out
 “ with so much apparatus what we knew
 “ perfectly well without this luggage
 “ of syllogistical demonstrations? and
 “ which we know not one whit the better
 “ for having proceeded in this case with
 “ the most profound meditation?”—*Abbé de Pluche’s history of the heavens, vol. 2. p. 151. translated by J. B. Trival, Esq;*

“ Such a man as Bayle,” says the
 same ingenious author, “ would have
 “ proved, to any benevolent listener, that
 “ the sight of terrestrial objects was im-
 “ possible. But they would have let
 “ him talk on, and not a whit less have
 “ made use of the spectacle of nature;
 “ because arguments must yield to expe-
 “ rience. It is the same thing with the
 “ clouds with which this rash logic-
 “ chopper has every where made it his
 “ business to darken the excellency of
 “ reason, of good manners, and of all
 “ religion. You can never offer to this
 “ man or his followers, any truth, whe-
 “ ther natural or revealed, but they im-
 “ mediately

“mediately have recourse to logic and
 “controversy : We must see : Let us pre-
 “viously examine : This may be said :
 “We shall ask : Why so ? In short, they
 “find nothing but uncertainty and dark-
 “ness every where, nor is it very certain
 “that the sun shines at noon.”—*Ibid.*
p. 281.

“Mr. Locke was the first in our time,”
 says Father Buffier, “who, rejecting o-
 “pinions founded rather on supposition
 “than realities, undertook to unfold the
 “operations of the human mind as
 “they appear in nature. On which ac-
 “count his philosophy has the same ad-
 “vantage above that of Descartes and
 “Malbranche, that a real history has a-
 “bove a romance.

“He generally examines every subject
 “in a method truly philosophical ; be-
 “ginning with simple clear ideas, and
 “those universally received ; and from
 “thence proceeding, by proper steps, to
 “discover such particular truths as con-
 “tribute to enlarge and improve the sci-
 “ences.

“He

“He hath strictly examined and pointed out the falsity of certain principles adopted by Descartes and other modern philosophers, making a fair and exact analysis of those ideas by which they were misled, and hath withal given a clear account of our ideas of solidity and space.

“Nothing is more judicious, or of more benefit to the interest of learning, than this author’s observations on simple ideas, namely, that mens conception of them is much the same, and that all the difference about them is owing to different terms made choice of, and tenaciously adhered to, by different sects of philosophers; from whence alone arises the confusion that enters into their way of reasoning, and of course into their judgment.

“He discovers throughout a love to truth, by which he is directed in the course he pursues; with a disposition, on all occasions, to quit his own opinion, whenever he can find any thing more certain, or nearer the truth.

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“This

"This proposition, "Whatever is, is"
 "says Mr. Locke, is not universally recei-
 "ved, because children do not think of any
 "such thing. There must here be some
 "mistake. For must not every one who
 "thinks at all, know that any one thing
 "he pitches upon is not another thing?
 "We may not always reflect upon this
 "judgment, but we must form it in our
 "mind, often without reflecting that we
 "do. The author therefore seems to have
 "confounded the reflex with the direct
 "act of the mind. Children themselves
 "will more or less explicitly agree, that
 "such a thing is not such another thing:
 "nor can you make them doubt, that
 "their foot is their foot, and their hand is
 "their hand.

"That innate principles are investiga-
 "ted by the exercise of reason, is false.
 "Is not here another mistake into which
 "this author is led by wrong notions he
 "entertained both of reason and of innate
 "principles? In effect, he allows no ex-
 "ercise to reason but that of deducing
 "consequences: which faculty, by other
 "philosophers,

“philosophers, is called *reasoning*; and
 “reason, on the other hand, is the fa-
 “culty of apprehending simple truths
 “that are the objects of common sense,
 “without regard to consequences that
 “may be deduced from them. If, by
 “innate ideas, the author means cer-
 “tain thoughts of which we are at all
 “times conscious, it would be ridicu-
 “lous to admit them, because we know,
 “from experience, that we are not at all
 “times conscious of many ideas that en-
 “ter into our minds. But if, by innate
 “ideas, he means truths which I call
 “primary, it would be absurd to reject
 “them, as I have shewn in treating that
 “subject.

“Mr. Locke puts the question, Where
 “is the practical truth that is received u-
 “niversally, and without hesitation?
 “Here, if I am not mistaken, is that
 “truth. You ought never to do a thing
 “which the generality of mankind, of
 “all nations, and at all times, condemn.
 “It was rash in Mr. Locke to affirm, that
 “the generality of mankind do not re-

“gard justice and fidelity as practical
“principles. They are not indeed a-
“greed, that certain points belong to fi-
“delity and justice. But all (excepting
“a very small number that may be con-
“sidered as monsters) hold for a maxim,
“That one ought to be faithful and just.
“There are also certain points in which
“all agree, as belonging to justice and
“fidelity; those, for example, That one
“ought, without compulsion, to restore
“the depositum with which he was in-
“trusted; and, That one ought not to
“with-hold the wages due to a servant
“against whom he has no ground of
“complaint. Such truths as these Mr.
“Locke ought to allow to be first princi-
“ples; and he seems to do no less in af-
“firming, that certain truths offer them-
“selves to our assent as soon as the terms
“which convey them are understood,
“and reduced to a plain proposition. He
“ought therefore to have been cautious
“of putting the question, Where is the
“practical truth universally received?
“because a doubt of that kind may be of
“dangerous

“ dangerous consequence. He ascribes
 “ the easy reception of these truths to
 “ their utility. But if that utility had
 “ not been manifest, they could not have
 “ been so easily and universally received.
 “ The instances he gives of enormous
 “ crimes being committed without re-
 “ morse, are not sufficiently vouched;
 “ and if they were, they prove only,
 “ that there are of the human race ex-
 “ treme wicked persons; which no body
 “ doubts.

“ Perception, he says, is the simple
 “ idea we have from reflection. But the
 “ idea of perception is independent of re-
 “ flection. When an object is fairly pre-
 “ sented to the mind, we perceive it be-
 “ fore we reflect that we do so. And,
 “ in reality, reflection is but a second
 “ act of perception, having the first act
 “ for its object. Our ideas of perception,
 “ therefore, do not come by reflection;
 “ but that second act, which we call re-
 “ flection, implies a preceding act of sim-
 “ ple perception.

“ The obligations of the law of nature,

“ he affirms, are clear, and seldom called
“ in question. . That is very true, if we
“ mean the fundamental laws of nature.
“ But this assertion does not so well ac-
“ cord with his peremptory demand,
“ Where is the practical truth universally
“ received ?”—*Remarks on Mr. Locke's Es-
say, by F. Bouffier.*

Mr. Locke hath so long and so justly
been possessed of the public esteem, and
his hypothesis hath been so uniformly
gone into by the learned, that, to speak
against it now, may give offence, and
perhaps beget in the minds of some the
same displeasure which speaking against
the hypothesis of Mr. Calvin would beget
in the minds of others. This, possibly,
the reader may soon know from his own
experience. For there is a necessity of
declaring, in plain terms, that Mr. Locke,
in his account of the origin of our ideas,
is guilty of an oversight of very bad con-
sequence. If, as this author represents,
we can have no ideas besides those arising
immediately from impressions made on
our organs of sense, or our own reflection
upon

upon these, then the authority of common sense must go for nothing, and a free scope is given to scepticism with respect to all truths that are not the immediate objects of sense.

Lord Bolingbroke, who professes himself a disciple and admirer of this great man, being aware of the advantage given him, hath employed all the powers of eloquence to avail himself of Mr. Locke's hypothesis. And though the world is not much disposed to pay great regard to the impetuous and refined reasonings of this nobleman, nor willing to submit to his peremptory decisions; yet must he be allowed the benefit of many observations he hath made with great justice. In truth, if we have no original ideas of religion and virtue, and all our knowledge of this kind must be gathered from abstractions made by ourselves, such knowledge must needs be precarious. Our general ideas, so fabricated, will be liable to much uncertainty, and our reasonings from them be yet more uncertain. We may give such reasonings the

appearance of demonstration, and they may pass for such with heedless and unskilful judges. But one who will trace them to their origin, and can discern the uncertainty of the principles from which they are derived, will hardly allow them that name. Almost demonstrable is become a common epithet with the learned; but seems to be a solecism in language, or at least an improper and inaccurate way of speaking. An almost Christian is, we know, no Christian, however near he may approach that character: and an almost demonstration is no demonstration, till the defect it labours under be supplied. And, on strict inquiry, it will be found, that all the demonstrations of primary truths made on Mr. Locke's principles labour under defects that cannot be supplied.

In generalizing our ideas, or, as Lord Bolingbroke, after Mr. Locke, chuses to term it, reducing them to bundles, there is great danger of committing mistakes. Through a defect of memory, we may leave out some quality that is essential;
and

and so our idea shall be lame and defective : or, through hurry and rashness, and perhaps through secret bias of inclination, we may slip in a quality which does not belong to the bundle ; and so our general idea becomes false and delusive. And then, when we come to mark these bundles by words, we may, through mistake, or defect of language, affix a name to our general idea that is not quite proper, being expressive of something more or something less than belongs to the idea. Further, as it is impossible for every individual to make a complete collection of general ideas for himself, and as it is necessary we use the collections made by others, we are in danger of being misled by the mistakes committed by other people in forming their ideas, or giving them proper names. Upon the whole, we cannot, by the strictest inquiry, and the most exact care, collect all the essential qualities belonging to any subject in nature, and keep them so entire and unmixed, that our ideas shall exactly correspond

spond with their archetypes, and therefore cannot absolutely depend on their being strictly true; and less can we depend on the truth of those conclusions we draw from them by reasoning. Such reasonings may, and must be used; but, on account of what is above mentioned, ought always to be used with modesty and caution, cannot produce the firm belief arising from original sentiments, and ought not, especially on subjects of the greatest importance, to be put in the place of that simple perception and judgment of obvious truth which is the characteristic of the rational mind.

That Mr. Locke seriously believed the great truths of religion, and was sincerely attached to them, will not be doubted: but the evidence he offers for the belief of those truths is not sufficient to give satisfaction to the bulk of mankind. He affirms the evidence for the being and perfections of God to be equal to mathematical certainty. But, unhappily for the bulk of mankind, he adds, that it requires thought and attention, and the
mind

mind must apply itself to a regular deduction of it from some parts of our intuitive knowledge, or else we shall be as uncertain and ignorant of this as of other propositions which are in themselves capable of clear demonstration. It is easy from hence to foresee the fate of those who are incapable of the attention and application of thought necessary even for mathematical, and still more necessary for pursuing a thread of metaphysical demonstration.

Were it true, as is alledged, that no higher evidence than what arises from reasoning could be obtained, we should find ourselves obliged to proceed upon such evidence as we had, with the same prudence by which we conduct ourselves in all other interesting affairs. But that no other evidence can be obtained, ought not to be admitted upon the authority of any, nor of all the philosophers. We are possessed of a belief of those truths far exceeding what can be procured by laboured reasoning; and must conclude, that there is an evidence, though not ad-
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verted to, superior to what has been offered by the learned ; and that we are bound to search for this evidence.

Besides the advantage of being relieved from all doubt and hesitation about truths so interesting and important, and the satisfaction arising upon the discovery of evidence in which the heart can rest with entire confidence, there are considerable effects resulting necessarily from our knowing those truths with the utmost certainty. The servant who expects his master's return the next week, or the next day, ought to have all things ready for his reception ; and if he is wise, will bestir himself with that view, whether he expects him with certainty or otherwise. But if the man is profligate or indolent, or not so wise or faithful to his master as he ought to be, he will take encouragement from the smallest degree of uncertainty of his master's return, and not bestir himself in the manner he would do if he knew the truth with absolute certainty. On all these considerations we must complain of Mr. Locke, as we shall

shall often have occasion to complain of his successors, for not pursuing their inquiry till they arrived at that evidence which belongs to the primary truths of religion.

Shall we say of this great and good man, as the learned Abbé says of the French philosopher, that having dismissed the fanciful conceit of innate ideas, he hath put us into another road as little sure, and perhaps more dangerous? We chuse rather to observe, with Father Buffier, what may be remarked of all succeeding philosophers, that Mr. Locke doth not distinguish between reason and reasoning; and therefore did not, and indeed could not, found the belief of primary truths upon the authority of that simple perception and judgment of the rational mind, which he had overlooked in framing his hypothesis.

It is worthy of notice, that Mr. Locke does not, like other logicians, set out with defining the different powers of the human mind. It is remarkable, and somewhat

what surprising, that you no where find a definition of that faculty called *judicium*, or simple judgment of obvious truth, in those places in which you have greatest reason to expect it, and where he writes so copiously of its exercise. And it is more than probable, that if he had taken this power into strict and full consideration at his outsetting, he would have given us a treatise on the human understanding different from, and, I will take the liberty to say, far more useful, than what he hath given, however useful and excellent that may be.

Mr. Locke condemns the intemperate love of reasoning which then prevailed in the schools. The schools, says he, having made disputation the touchstone of mens abilities, and the criterion of knowledge, adjudged victory to him who kept the field; so that he who had the last word, was thought to have had the best of the argument, if not of the cause. But to prevent as much as could be the running out of disputes into an endless train of syllogisms, he informs us, that certain

general propositions were introduced to serve as measures of truth: and these maxims getting the name of principles, beyond which men in dispute could not retreat, were, by mistake, taken to be the original and source of all knowledge, and the foundation whereon the sciences are built. He further adds, that these maxims are not of use to help men forward in the advancement of science, or discovery of truths unknown; that they are not the foundation on which any science hath been built; and that they are of no use to confirm less general and self-evident truths. He shews, by a variety of instances, that not only the few propositions which have had the credit of maxims, are self-evident, but a great many, almost an infinite number, of other propositions are such. He affirms, that where the agreement or disagreement of our ideas is perceived immediately by itself, and without the help or intervention of any other, there our knowledge is self-evident. And this, he says, will appear to be so to any one who will but consider those

those propositions which, without proof, he assents to at first sight. In this manner does this great philosopher expose the bad practice of the schools, and point out another and better method of coming at knowledge. What a pity is it that he did not go on to shew the distinction between primary and secondary truths! Had he distinguished, with due care, those truths which are perceived at once by the faculty of reason, from those that are found out by reasoning, learning would have assumed another appearance from what it has; philosophy and theology would have been delivered from many foolish and frivolous cavils with which the minds of men have been tortured; and people of speculation would have kept themselves within the bounds of common sense.

As matters now stand, every truth of every kind must be traced by a chain of reasoning, to the testimony of our senses, or to the axioms of the schools. Hence all pretenders to philosophy call for a proof or demonstration of all truths without

out exception. None are admitted as self-evident besides those authorised by the schools, under the denomination of *axioms*. People stare at the great truths of religion and virtue being called the objects of simple perception; and, instead of being admitted upon their own inherent evidence, their friends have been put to the hard task of tracing them to the standard of the schools by trains of logical deduction.

C H A P. II.

According to the modern hypothesis, it is impossible to arrive at full satisfaction concerning truths the most obvious and important.

There arose of late in Great Britain a genius, who drew the attention of all the world to his amazing discoveries, and raised the esteem of mathematical evidence to so great a pitch, that, with some high pretenders to wisdom, no other proof was deemed sufficient. Sceptics

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and freethinkers called loudly for a strict demonstration of the truths of religion, and the unwary zeal of divines and philosophers made them comply with the demand. Geometric demonstrations of the being and attributes of God, of the eternal and unalterable obligations of moral virtue, and even of the Christian revelation, were offered to the world; which surprised and satisfied many, and amused all. But upon observing the impossibility of rendering our ideas of invisible objects as precise and determinate as are those of objects that are visible, and of tracing the connection between one abstract idea and another, with the same certainty with which we trace the relations of numbers, and external forms, divines and philosophers thought fit to drop all claim to mathematical, and pitch upon moral certainty, as congruous to religion and virtue.

What the exact meaning of moral certainty may be; whether it imports a certainty different in kind, but equal in degree, to mathematical; or whether it im-
ports

ports no more than a degree of probability, and the highest that the subject admits of, seems not to be clearly determined. Here, then, is a real embarrassment. The friends of religion and virtue are unwilling to rest in probability, even of the highest kind, and yet find it difficult to go beyond it. They have attempted strict proof and demonstration, but have not succeeded to their own satisfaction, much less to that of their adversaries. There must therefore be some capital error or defect, not in the cause they have undertaken, but in the management*.

It

* It were to be wished, before any demonstration had been attempted, the friends of religion had considered, whether its fundamental truths were capable or not of strict demonstration, and taken their measures accordingly. The lowest degree of probability in subjects that are interesting, is sufficient to determine the conduct of the wise; a higher degree of probability brings them under a yet stronger obligation; and that degree of probability which approaches so near to proof as hardly to be distinguished from it, will have weight sufficient with all who govern themselves by prudence or good sense. If therefore the friends of religion, finding they had no pretension to strict proof or demonstration, had employed

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It hath been already observed, that writers on logic content themselves with giving a definition of perception and judgment, without unfolding their exercise, or showing the extent of their jurisdiction and authority; and that Mr. Locke, who may with great justice be called the modern Aristotle, hath, in

their utmost skill in setting forth the probability of its fundamental truths, they must have had great success. Sceptics could not gainsay them, and men of sense and prudence would have submitted to the authority of religion. If indeed they had found, on due inquiry, that the truths of religion were capable of strict proof, or of demonstration in the strict sense of that word, their success would have been yet greater; because they would have left no room for doubt or hesitation with any thinking being. But to offer to the world what may be called proof and no proof, or a demonstration that is not complete, or labours under any the smallest defect, was at least ill advised. The demonstration might take with many, but not with all; might pass even with strict judges at some times, and in some moods, but not in others. As soon as the flaw should begin to appear, scepticism must take place, and be not a little heightened by the disappointment the mind had suffered. Perhaps this is the true account of that scepticism which is said to prevail in some thinking persons of good disposition. On all these accounts, it seems necessary, that we betake ourselves to probability, or search for that evidence which may give full satisfaction to inquisitive minds.

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forming his hypothesis, overlooked them altogether. And we doubt not to make appear, that succeeding philosophers have not been at due pains to investigate the powers of the human mind; and that this is one of the chief causes of that variation and uncertainty in their opinions and reasonings so much complained of.

The anatomy of the human body hath been long a serious study, and every solid and fluid hath been strictly scrutinized; but the human mind hath never yet come under the same careful inspection. The powers of compounding, dividing, and abstracting our ideas, have been unfolded with great accuracy and judgment. But its leading power, that which is supreme in the rational mind, and is its chief prerogative and characteristic, hath been much neglected. Its objects are not enumerated, its extent is not known, and its authority is little regarded: for which reason a standard of theologic, ethic, and political truth, is to this hour a *desideratum* with the learn-

ed. On all these subjects we are become expert reasoners, but hardly know when or where to stop, or how to form a firm and steady judgment.

In natural philosophy, we have recourse by experiment, to the testimony of our senses. In mathematics, we can trace every proposition with certainty to those axioms which are the first principles of the science. But in theology and ethics, we have no primary truths or first principles. If a mistake is committed in natural philosophy, an appeal is made to our external senses by repeated experiment; and he who refuses to submit to that authority, is deemed a fool. In mathematics also, a falsity may be corrected by an appeal to truths which none but madmen will dispute. But in those sciences on which the right government of our lives depends, one may maintain an endless wrangling, without the danger of confutation. Nay, many do actually maintain the wildest paradoxes on all these subjects, and in contradiction to the plainest and most important truths,

without the imputation of folly, or the hazard of being put to the blush, because the fundamental truths of those sciences cannot be traced with absolute certainty to the testimony of sense. They may indeed, with infinite labour, and manifold dangers of mistake, be traced to a few abstract principles, by those who have been trained to pursue truth through the pathless field of metaphysics; and they have been so traced in different ages, but with small success, and with no probability of ever coming to a final decision.

To say nothing of the disputes maintained by ancient sages for some hundred years about the chief good, we have abundant proof of the impropriety of investigating primary truths by reasoning, from the unsuccessful attempts of able divines and philosophers in our own day, to establish the belief of truths the most interesting and important.

Let any man, learned or unlearned, take a view of Mr. Locke's demonstration, or of the demonstration of the being and perfections of God made by Dr. Clarke,

and he will see the insufficiency of all such methods of reasoning to give the satisfaction expected and required. If he is unlearned, he will find himself incapable of taking a steady view, and forming a true judgment, of the principles on which these learned men proceed. If he is accustomed to the language and ways of thinking common to the learned, he may admit the principles, and allow the justness of the conclusion, but will not be one whit more convinced of the truth in question than he was without the demonstration. There is something so odd, fantastical, I had almost said nonsensical, in allowing a power of action to nothing, in supposing that a being could give itself existence, or that an incogitative being could be the source of thought and cogitation, that one is stunned and confounded with such ideas, and knows not how to reason about them. A man of sense will grant at once, that all such talk is flagrant nonsense, and that the opposite truth is good sense: for that he sees intuitively; and nothing but the inveterate
dregs

dregs of false science could have led great and good men to authorise or allow of any such reasoning on a subject so plain and important.

Mr. Locke, with justice, resolves the source of moral obligation into the will of God; but, revelation apart, hath left us no criterion to be depended on for discovering the divine will. He insists on the general consent of mankind; but takes notice at the same time, as indeed he had reason, of the various and contradictory opinions entertained on this subject by different ages and nations. He affirms, that interest gives mankind a just direction. And that, in many cases, it does so, will be allowed. But that in other cases it gives a false direction, cannot be denied: and how ill qualified mankind are to take a complex view of any subject, and to form an impartial and true judgment of their interest upon the whole, appears abundantly from history and common observation. Mr. Locke seems to have known nothing of the inherent beauty of good, and ugliness

ness of bad actions; of the irresistible conviction of *ought* and *ought not*; and of merit and demerit, which belongs to the rational mind; or, rather, he would not allow these realities to be proper objects of intuition. Thus, by a mistake about the origin of our ideas, hath Mr. Locke left the primary truths of religion and virtue under some suspicion of uncertainty, or supported at best by evidence disproportioned to their dignity and importance. And from hence arises the inability which appears in writers of great learning and industry, to give satisfaction to the world concerning truths in which all mankind are concerned, and about which common sense decides at first sight.

A divine of great subtilty and compass of thought, taking offence at the representations of the divine will gone into by the current of theological writers, discovered reasons, relations, and fitnesses of things, eternal, immutable, and independent on the will of any being, as the rule of conduct to all intelligent agents
supreme

supreme and subordinate. Another, of deep erudition and manly sense, dissatisfied, as would seem, with the boldness of this discovery, resolves all duty into an obligation to conform to the truth of things. Another had recourse to utility; and another to sympathy. One resolves all moral agency into self-love; another into benevolence. One invents a new sense, to be the standard of moral action; and another points out a multiplicity of perceptions, feelings, and instinctive emotions belonging to the human mind. Each contradicts, and endeavours to confute another; but all were animated with an unfeigned zeal of discovering, if possible, a proper medium to demonstrate — what? — that we ought to worship God, to do justice to men, and to keep our affections and appetites within just and proper bounds.

Lay this account of things before one of true judgment, unacquainted with the way of the learned, and he will scarce believe it. Assure him of its reality, and he will be much amazed. Try to account

count for this conduct of the learned to one of his way of thinking, and you shall find you have undertaken a difficult task. To what purpose, he will say, attempt to demonstrate truths of which none but fools are ignorant, and which none but madmen will deny? Are not the obligations of morality obvious at first sight, more easily apprehended, and more readily assented to, than the subtle reasoning of philosophers? You may tell him, that shrewd surmises had been thrown out against the reality of moral obligation, which made it fit, and in some degree necessary, to attempt a demonstration. But he will stop you short, by asserting, in a high tone perhaps, that no demonstration is of equal force with common sense; and no confutation can serve the interest of truth so effectually as a plain conviction of nonsense; and therefore that it was the business of divines and philosophers to have had recourse to the simple decision of common sense on a subject so plain and important.

Much may be said of the benefit accruing

cruing to learning from the researches of those great men, of the difficulty of disentangling the sciences from those subtleties in which they had been long involved, and of the impossibility of reaching at once such views of truth as inquirers of moderate capacity may reach now by the laudable efforts of those who came before them. But still it must be owned, that men of genius and learning do indulge a licentiousness in reasoning, and that proper care hath not been taken to preserve that harmony and good understanding which ought always to subsist between philosophy and common sense.

C H A P. III.

In consequence of the modern hypothesis, writers of distinguished character have run into the utmost licentiousness of reasoning, in contradiction to evident and important truths.

DOCTOR Berkeley, late Bishop of Cloyne, hath, with plausibility enough, demonstrated, that this system of

of matter which we inhabit, is a mere non-entity; that those houses, fields, rivers, trees, which we seem to see, and those very bodies we are supposed to animate, have no existence, or no other than an ideal existence.

Mr. Hume hath, with great power of argumentation and eloquence, proved, that we cannot, by reasoning, reach the connection between cause and effect; and from hence concludes, dogmatically, that we have no evidence at all of any such connection. The author of the *Essays upon the principles of morality and natural religion*, published Edinburgh 1751, affirms, that the being and perfections of God are not capable of proof from reason, or not of such proof as gives permanent conviction. The two last mentioned authors, with several others of distinguished ability, have offered a chain of strict reasoning, in proof that man hath, in no case, a power of self-determination; but is, in all his actions, determined by what they call a moral necessity, which they affirm to be as real a necessity

as any other. Lord Bolingbroke hath employed the whole force of his faculties to satisfy the world, that those ideas of the immateriality and immortality of the soul, of a future retribution, of the moral government, and of the moral perfections of God, entertained by divines and philosophers in ancient and modern times, are without all foundation in nature.

These are terrible doings; and were it not for the authority of common sense, such as would go near to introduce an universal scepticism. But common sense looks down with disdain on such glaring absurdities. Mere scholars, and those who found their faith on logical deductions, may well be alarmed with such bold paradoxes, supported as they are by writers of so great eminence. But all who trust to common sense, may rest assured, that the great truths of natural philosophy, theology, and ethics, will maintain their ground against all the attacks of the most subtile reasoning. These doctrines do hurt to raw minds and superficial

perfidious thinkers, but can give no disturbance to men of sound understanding and solid judgment; for indeed they have no influence, or but little influence, on those who adopt them.

It is probable, that the design of disproving the reality of matter, was first entertained by the Bishop of Cloyne, in the gayety of his heart, and with a view to burlesque the refinements of infidels. But the good Bishop was caught in his own trap; and, like the infidels themselves, became the dupe of his own subtilty. Nevertheless, it is well known, that this excellent person was tenderly concerned for the temporal as well as the spiritual interests of his fellow-citizens, and no less zealous for promoting agriculture and manufactures in the kingdom of Ireland, than if he had believed that corn, cattle, and linen, were realities. The bold and penetrating genius of Mr. Hume was exactly fitted to discover and expose the prevailing folly of the learned, in going about to prove by argument the primary truths of nature;

ture; and agreeably to that liberty which he takes on all subjects, he might also maintain, in the face of the world, that we have no evidence at all for those truths. But Mr. Hume at bottom believes in the powers of nature; the power of fire, for instance, to scorch, and of water to suffocate living creatures, so far at least as not to venture too near those dangerous elements. The author of the Moral Essays professes his belief in the Deity and the divine perfections: nor is there any ground to doubt his sincerity*; for his feelings, whatever he means by them, may be allowed to produce an effect in his mind equal to what is produced in the minds of others by a multiplicity of arguments. The advocates for necessity have, in spite of their hypothesis, the same consciousness of good and evil desert, and do condemn

* That this author firmly believes the great truths of religion, and is warmly attached to them, is not only known to those who are honoured with his friendship, but sufficiently manifest to all from his laudable behaviour in the high station which he fills.

or excuse themselves in much the same manner, as they would have done if they had believed themselves to be free agents. Lord Bolingbroke might have availed himself of his scepticism a little in the heat of youth, and in perfect health; but we are told of his being driven from life with as little composure and self-command, as the meanest sinner, who entertains the belief of a place of darkness, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. It is in good earnest surprising, that men, otherwise of so great discernment, should appear so insensible to the absurdity of their conduct. Such sort of speculations might pass as a pretty enough play of fancy in a circle of virtuosi; but to offer them with a serious air to the world, was too much. A philosopher ought, no doubt, to be above vulgar prejudices; but he cannot, with safety to his own character, set himself above the common sense of mankind. His business is not to confound the ignorant and the unthinking with paradoxical opinions, but to pursue
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his inquiries, until he arrive at an account of things in which men of judgment can rest.

To resolve, as Mr. Hume has done, our belief of the connection between cause and effect, and of course the conviction we have of all the powers of nature, into custom, or habit of thinking, is extremely unphilosophical. He ought to have known, that the world could not rest in this account of things; that every one has a right to put some questions about the origin, the cause, or the occasion of a way of thinking so prevalent, on a subject of so great consequence; and that no one would think himself well used by a philosopher, who gave so lame and unsatisfying an answer to queries so reasonable and just. Should a traveller, through curiosity, or with a view to some useful discovery, inquire of a peasant the source of the river that runs by his dwelling, he might from him put up with this simple answer, That he did not know it: But should he put the same question to a man of education, and one

too who had traversed those grounds, and be told, that he neither knew the source of the stream, nor whether it had any source at all ; and that all the information that could be given of its origin is, that time immemorial it has been observed to run as it does : such an answer from one of this character would be considered as unmannerly, if not a downright insult.

The author of the *Essays* blames the boldness of his learned friend ; but being as much convinced as he of the impossibility of proving the reality of power by a medium, he resolves the universal belief of it into a feeling of truth, which he says belongs to the human mind. If by internal feeling this author meant the simple judgment of reason, or common sense, we should think ourselves bound to agree with him ; but as there is ground to suspect, that by internal feeling he means something different, and in some instances seems to set his feelings in opposition to reason, we think ourselves
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bound to differ from this ingenious author, as we do from his learned friend.

To shew the unhappy effects of a false hypothesis on the minds, even of those of good intention and distinguished ability, it is fit to observe, that the author of the *Essays* hath this strange assertion, *p.* 296. "It may be possible, for any reason we have to the contrary, that a blind and undefining cause may be productive of excellent effects:" such effects he means as a fine piece of painting, a well-written poem, or a beautiful piece of architecture. It is plain he had no idea of the authority of reason itself, otherwise he could not have run into so gross an absurdity; for he must have found, that instead of not having any reason, as he alledges, we have all the reason in the world against his supposition, and that all such suppositions are a flat contradiction to all rational conception, or to the common sense of mankind.

B O O K III.

To banish scepticism, and establish the belief of primary truths, it is necessary to depart from the modern hypothesis, and to have recourse to the authority of common sense.

C H A P. I.

It is impossible to make a rational account of our belief of many truths of great importance, without having recourse to common sense.

WE have already complained, that the human mind hath not been examined with the same care and accuracy that is employed in the anatomy of the human body. We must now take the liberty of entering this further complaint, that philosophers have not instituted

instituted an exact comparison between the powers of rational minds and those of the irrational. They who make the human body their study, have, by what is called *comparative anatomy*, not only made great additions to their knowledge of the powers of nature, but have reached an exact idea of the difference between the structure of the human body and that of other animals; and it were to be wished that the study of the human mind had been pursued in the same manner. Metaphysicians, and moral philosophers, do frequently illustrate their doctrines by allusion to the powers of children, of idiots, and lower animals; but not having pursued the comparison with the care and attention that are necessary, they have not reached a clear and true idea of the characteristic of rationality, or of that power of the rational mind which is its chief prerogative, and by which it is distinguished from idiots and the lower animals.

Had Mr. Locke begun his Essay on the human understanding with the compari-

son we speak of, he would not have resolved all our ideas into two powers, of which the lower animals participate, and would have found himself obliged to search for other inlets of truth peculiar to the human mind, which the other animals have not. That brutes have sensations equal, and in some instances superior to ours, will not be denied; that by the help of memory they can recollect and reflect upon the ideas they get by sensation, can as little be doubted; and that they are capable of comparing, compounding, dividing, and perhaps abstracting these ideas, seems highly probable: but that nevertheless their understanding is specifically different from ours, will appear evidently from their being utterly incapable of a great variety of perceptions of truth which are obvious to the rational mind.

Mr. Locke, in the course of his Essay, has mentioned a variety of simple perceptions of truth, accompanied with a simple act of unerring judgment; of which he hath not so much as attempted
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an account, and of which, we will be bold to affirm, no satisfying account can be given upon his hypothesis.

Every one believes the reality of matter; and every one hath therefore in his mind some idea of its reality. Now whence come this idea and this belief? The properties of matter are the objects of sense, but matter itself is not. Can we then by feeling the properties, and reflecting on these feelings, (let us reflect on them ever so much), arrive at an idea of matter without the assistance of another power? A castle and a cottage fall under the eye at once, and at first sight we pronounce the one to be bigger than the other. By what power do we perceive the difference, and by what standard do we judge? The difference of size is to us as distinct an object of perception as the things perceived; and we have as clear an idea, with as firm a belief, of the reality of this difference, as we have of the reality of the castle and cottage, which are the objects of sense. But this difference is no object of sense;
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nor is the idea we have of it deducible from sensation, or from any reflection we can make upon our sensation, without the assistance of some other power. Every one hath, or may with a little attention have, an idea of energy or power, and of the inviolable connection between cause and effect. Whence comes this idea? We see the cause, and we see the effect, and are often witnesses of the one producing the other: but we do not see that power or energy in the cause by which the effect is produced, nor can we, by any form of logical deduction, infer, that we see not from what we see. Every one hath, or with due attention may have, an idea of merit and demerit in moral agents; but not from sensation or reflection without the intervention of another power. The actions of the hero, and the actions of the villain, may become the objects of sensation, and this sensation may become the subject of frequent recollection: but without the intervention of a power peculiar to rational beings, we could never arrive at that
idea

idea of merit and demerit which we affix to the one and to the other. By contemplating the harmony of the universe we have, and must have, the idea of a governing mind. Now, whence comes this idea? Not from sensation, nor from reflection upon sensation, if we take these words in the sense they are fit to convey, and do not affix to them an idea of some other power, of which we have no particular account in Mr. Locke's Essay. There is then a visible defect in his hypothesis.

Mr. Locke appears sensible of the justness of these observations; and seems to acknowledge so much in his answer to the Bishop of Worcester, though he does not supply the defect, by tracing our perceptions to their true source. He does not say that the idea of matter or substance comes by sensation or reflection; but that it is ultimately founded in the exercise of these powers. He means, that sensation and reflection give occasion to our ideas of matter, and to all the other ideas above mentioned. But the distinction

inction between the occasion and the cause of a thing is too considerable to be overlooked in a philosophical inquiry. Sensation and reflection do indeed give occasion to all our ideas, but do not therefore produce them. They may, in our present state, be considered as the *sine qua non* to our most rational and sublime conceptions; but are not therefore the powers by which we form them. These conceptions are formed in us by another, and a different power, which Mr. Locke, and unhappily, after him, the bulk of the learned have overlooked.

You put Homer into the hand of one who is master of the Greek language, and he reads with understanding; but his doing so is owing, not to his having the book in his hand, though that be necessary, but to his understanding the language: And to speak with accuracy, you would say, that he reads with understanding, not by having the book in his hand, but by his knowledge of the language. It is precisely so with regard to all the above-mentioned ideas: they
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ought not to be resolved into those acts of the mind which give occasion to their formation, but into those powers by which they are formed.

We chearfully concur with the public in giving Mr. Locke the high character he hath been so long possessed of, and to which he is so justly intitled, provided we are indulged the liberty of observing, that he hath committed a capital oversight of very bad consequence. By resolving all our ideas into sensation and reflection, and pronouncing of course all ideas fantastical which cannot be traced to that origin, he hath not only put the learned on a false scent, but hath brought the primary truths of nature under suspicion, and opened a door to universal scepticism. The being of matter, the connection between cause and effect, the power of self-determination in animals, the moral perfections and moral government of God, with the essential difference between virtue and vice, have been impugned by men of reputation for learning and genius; and frivolous disputes

putes upon all, or most of these subjects, have been maintained, to the detriment of religion, and disgrace of the human understanding. Nor will it be possible to put an end to these disputes, without searching farther into the powers of the human mind than Mr. Locke has done. These considerations, it is hoped, will justify our finding fault with the hypothesis of this philosopher.

Mr. Hume had penetration enough to perceive the defect of Mr. Locke's hypothesis, but had not the courage to supply that defect in the only way in which it could be supplied. Perhaps he suspected that philosophers would not submit to the authority of common sense, or was himself too much a philosopher to have recourse to an authority so vulgar and homely. He therefore found himself under a necessity of making the best account he could of the phænomena of nature, by the received doctrine of the connection and association of ideas; and it must be owned, that his account is extremely ingenious. He hath also, in his Essay on
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the reason of animals, gone farther than other philosophers, in an accurate comparison of our powers with theirs; and hath, with his usual dexterity, brought them very near to equality. But Mr. Hume ought to have taken notice of an essential difference between himself and the most sagacious greyhound. He must know himself to be possessed of a vast treasure of truths, of which the other is incapable. He ought also to have observed, that our knowledge of the laws of agriculture, of navigation, of commerce, of civil government, of religion, of morals, which all are objects of perception and judgment to us, and absolutely imperceptible to inferior animals, makes too considerable a distinction to be overlooked; and that it was incumbent on him as a philosopher to have searched for the cause of the difference. Mr. Hume takes notice of the effect of discipline and education on animals; and how, by the proper application of rewards and punishments, they may be taught any course of action, the most contrary to
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their natural instinct and propensities. He ought also to have observed a great variety of actions beneficial to themselves and serviceable to mankind, and otherwise not of difficult execution, which they cannot be taught, nor brought to perform, by the application of any rewards or punishments, on account of a certain defect of understanding they labour under. Had Mr. Hume inquired into this defect with due care and attention, he would have reached the characteristic of rationality, and thereby have accounted for our knowledge of the connection between cause and effect, in a manner more to his own satisfaction, and that of his readers.

The author of the *Essays*, alarmed at Mr. Hume's confounding rational belief with credulity, and denying the connection between cause and effect, hath said all that is necessary in confutation of his opinion. But he hath confuted Mr. Hume upon principles too near akin to his own. He hath recourse to our being so constituted, that we must perceive, feel,

feel, and believe, certain truths; without laying open the human constitution, or once attempting to point out that in our frame, which produces a way of thinking, which he justly says is unavoidable. That certain persons are so constituted, is perhaps all the account that can be made of odd or fanciful perceptions or feelings: but a more satisfying account ought to be given of the perception mankind have of the primary truths of nature.

We are undoubtedly allied to the lower animals; but we are also distinguished from them. We may, and the unthinking part of mankind do, fall into ways of judging like them: but we are capable of judging in another manner, and are strictly bound to assert our prerogative. There are propensities and powers in the human constitution, of the mechanical kind, that are of great consequence in life and action: but there are powers of another, and a superior kind, that are of no less consequence. The ingenious author of the *Essays* hath

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not with due care distinguished the one from the other, or hath not bestowed that attention on the leading power which is due; nor seems he to have reached a true and full view of the characteristic of a rational being.

We are so constituted, as necessarily to pursue pleasure and avoid pain: So are idiots, and the lower animals. We are so constituted, as at proper seasons to feel the return of hunger, thirst, and other desires, necessary for the preservation of our lives, and the continuance of our species: So are all the lower animals. But can this be called a just account of the human constitution? No, says our ingenious author; we have perceptions, feelings, and instincts, of a different, and superior kind. Let us see then whether we can be distinguished from them by perceptions, feelings, and instinctive emotions. We are so constituted, that without debate or deliberation, and often without consciousness of what we are about, we employ our utmost skill and ability for our preservation and safety:
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So are idiots, and the lower animals. We are so constituted, as to associate with, and delight in those of our kind, to sympathise with their sufferings, to rejoice in their happiness, and to lend them our friendly aid in danger or distress: So are all, or the greatest part of the lower animals. We are so constituted, as to resent injuries and favours: So do all the lower animals, not excepting the most stupid and insensible. We are so constituted, as to repel an assault on our persons, or the invasion of our property, and to concur with our associates in maintaining the rights of that society we belong to: So are many, if not all the tribes of lower animals. We have an instinctive sense of dignity, with an innate desire of superiority: So have they. We have a feeling of authority over inferiors, and of the submission due to superiors: And so have many, if not the greatest part of lower animals. These are perceptions, propensities, and instinctive emotions, of great necessity in life, and of too great consequence to the interests of

virtue, to be overlooked, or slightly regarded, as they too often have been by divines and philosophers. But are these all the powers of the rational mind? or are these perceptions and feelings, with the faculty of reasoning about them, all the direction which nature hath given to rational beings for the conduct of their lives? Such, it would appear, is the opinion of modern philosophers. But upon a little farther inquiry it will be found, that besides the perceptions we have in common with lower animals, and the faculty of deducing consequences from them, we have perceptions specifically different from these, which the lower animals have not. These perceptions may be called faint and obscure; and are perhaps the more so, that they have been so much neglected by the learned. But they are real, easily discovered, and capable of great augmentation by culture and exercise, and of too great consequence to be slightly passed over.

We do not alledge that rational perception is entirely overlooked by this author:

thor: we are willing to suppose, that it is included in his idea of taste and feeling, especially when he speaks of a feeling of truth. But that is not enough. The perception of obvious truth and palpable absurdity, by which we are distinguished from the lower animals, is too considerable a power to be either overlooked, or confounded with another that is subordinate and dependent. That the powers are distinct, and may be separately considered, is evident from hence, that our feeling is often low and languid, when our perception of truth is clear and strong: and further, that we often perceive objects without any degree of emotion or feeling. Our perception of interesting objects is indeed accompanied with some degree of feeling; but our perception of objects that are common, inconsiderable, and quite disinterested, is not. That these different acts ought to be separately considered, appears further from hence, that they are equally indispensable in forming a wise and virtuous conduct; and that the interests of virtue

cannot be maintained without the one or the other.

That sensibility of heart which gives birth to our feelings and instinctive emotions, is, as has been already observed, too considerable a part of our frame to be overlooked: but the power of distinguishing obvious truth from palpable absurdity is no less considerable, and no less worthy of attention. The one is the spring, but the other is the regulator of wise and virtuous conduct. If the one is necessary to put the soul in motion, the other is no less so in guiding, checking, and governing its motions.

It is commonly observed, and most worthy of observation, that the perceptions, feelings, and instinctive emotions of lower animals, are seldom false or irregular. Being adjusted and limited by the hand of nature, they need no regulator. But it is otherwise with rational beings, at least with those of the human kind. They are furnished with a regulator, which if they neglect, or do not employ with due care and assiduity, they must

must go wrong, and may not only fall short of the end of their being, but plunge themselves in vice and misery. Nor is the use of this regulator only necessary in the government of our lower appetites; but our best and most generous affections need to be regulated. Our love of beauty, of dignity, our humanity, benevolence, and even our devout and pious affections, left to their own direction, or not conducted and regulated by that power of the human mind which is supreme, will run into extravagance, and degenerate into vice. That faculty, therefore, of distinguishing between fit and unfit, right and wrong, in conduct, by which we are raised above inferior animals, must be closely attended to, and kept in continual exercise; otherwise we may turn out enthusiasts in virtue, but shall never reach the character of wise and virtuous.

To shew further of what consequence this faculty is, of which we speak, let two well-known facts be kept in remembrance; namely, that a relish or feeling

of the excellence of virtue, is often acquired at first, and when lost, may be again recovered, by the due exercise of that perception of truth peculiar to the rational mind. A dishonest man may see as clearly as that two and three make five, his obligation to do to others as he would be done by. Hath he therefore feelings and emotions corresponding to this perception? He hath them not. But by again and again viewing and reviewing the truth he assents to, and endeavouring, as he can, to act in conformity to his judgment, he may, and through the blessing of God many actually do, acquire feelings and emotions that in due time become a steady principle of an uniformly just and virtuous conduct. Again, it is well known, that by ill education, ill example, and a habit of vicious indulgence, one may lose his feeling of moral excellence. But, the case of madness excepted, he cannot lose a perception of the difference between obvious truth and palpable absurdity. To this perception then he may, and ought to have

have recourse; and by giving it due exercise, and endeavouring to act under its direction, he may, with patience and labour, recover those feelings and emotions which he had lost. Shall we then make light of a power, on the exercise of which the formation and preservation of the virtuous character do so remarkably depend?

We agree with this author in setting aside the discursive power, because of the uncertainty of its conclusions; but cannot agree with him in putting the helm into the hand of feelings, instinctive emotions, or even of perceptions of any kind besides those we speak of; because they only may be depended on in the conduct of life. The most plausible demonstration, it is true, may be baffled by an opposite demonstration wrought up with superior skill in reasoning: and it is also true, that the noblest, most generous feelings and instincts, may be borne down by opposite instincts and feelings, which for the time have the ascendant in the human mind. But if a
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man is not a fool indeed, he will not for the sake of any demonstration, or in compliance with any instinctive emotions, give up obvious truth, or give in to palpable absurdity. We therefore conclude, that this power of distinguishing between obvious truth and palpable absurdity holds the first rank in the human mind, and is intitled to the first notice in every theory of morals. And though we allow, that the world is indebted to the author of the *Essays* for investigating with so much accuracy the feelings of the human mind, and pointing out their exact correspondence with primary truths, yet must regret his not paying all the attention due to that discernment of obvious truth, which is an essential ingredient in our idea of common sense, and will be found the characteristic of rationality.

CHAP.

C H A P. II.

Late writers of genius and industry have failed in their attempts to account for the natural sentiments of mankind, through a shyness to quit the modern hypothesis in favour of common sense.

THE opprobrious epithet of *bigot* has been so long appropriated to the religious, that scarce will the use of language allow of an application of it to others; though the narrowness of thought, and slavish submission to authority, which constitute the character, are commonly found in all classes of men, in the active as well as the speculative part of mankind, and in those who start aside from the common track, as well as in others who hold on in their course with quietness and uniformity. A horse of high mettle, unbroken to the yoke, will leap and bounce, and alarm and terrify all about him with the irregularity and violence

violence of his motions; but not being able to disengage himself altogether, is incapable of moving with that ease and dignity which is natural to so noble an animal. Human creatures, in like manner, galled with the yoke of servitude, will mutiny, form cabals, raise dreadful commotions: but, if they are incapable of shaking off the yoke, cannot reduce themselves to that harmonious and beautiful order which belongs to well-regulated society. Just so, men of genius often make violent fallies, to the amazement and disquiet of the learned, without being able to reach the truth, through an unperceived attachment to some philosophical hypothesis, which checks their motions, and renders them extravagantly irregular.

One cannot read the philosophical works of Lord Viscount Bolingbroke without sensible regret; because in them he sees those noble powers designed by nature for discovering and enforcing truth, confined in their exercise to the mean task of laying open the defects and fallacies

fallacies of a philosophical hypothesis; to which, however, his Lordship was devoted, within which he moves, and beyond the limits of which he does not adventure to make one step. By the impetuous force of his eloquence, he seems to shake the foundations of philosophy, and, with an unrelenting hand, to level with the ground the venerable structures of ancient and modern times, without having it in his power to substitute in their place any hypothesis of his own that could give satisfaction to men of sense. It is probable, that succeeding writers will retaliate upon him the abuse he has thrown out on names the most respectable and venerable; and posterity will see, that, amidst the wreck of characters, in which he delights, he has made shipwreck of his own reputation.

The spirit and course of this Noble writer is admirably set forth in these lines of Mr. Pope:

*Or, meteor-like, flames lawless through
the void,*

Destroying others, by himself destroy'd.

Any one the least acquainted with Mr. Hume's writings, will perceive a genius fitted for making discoveries; and few will doubt his having courage to quit the common track of philosophy in pursuit of truth: Yet Mr. Hume hath not pushed his inquiries their due length, nor made those discoveries which might be expected from his penetration and spirit.

In his Philosophical Essays concerning human understanding, he gives a just and clear view of two kinds of philosophy, with the advantages resulting from each; and, as a friend of truth, expresses his concern that the principles on which the one is founded, are not so well ascertained as the principles of other sciences. He proposes the ascertaining of those principles as an attempt worthy of inquisitive minds; but seems rather to wish than hope their success. He attempts the investigation of the connection between cause and effect, but with a visible timidity. He demonstrates the impossibility of discovering
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that connection *a priori*; and puts in a clear light the absurdity of proving the reality of that connection by reasoning: and after some fruitless attempts to give satisfaction to his reader, or even to himself, he declares, that the truth in question cannot be discovered, because it is neither an object of intuition, nor deducible by reasoning from any known principle. But is this method of proceeding becoming Mr. Hume? Does he entertain the same opinion of philosophic systems, which devotees of different churches have of their creeds and confessions? Must every deviation from the established system be accounted heterodox? Is the philosophy in being absolutely perfect, and incapable of receiving any addition to its perfection by any new discovery? Has not Mr. Hume the courage to venture one step beyond that magic circle drawn by Aristotle, by Mr. Locke, and authorised by his predecessors in philosophy? It is true, that the connection between cause and effect is not an object of intuition, taking intuition

in the sense in which it is commonly understood in the schools: it is also true, and he himself has demonstrated invincibly, that it is incapable of proof by reasoning: and it is well known, that philosophers allow of no other method of investigation, besides what they call *intuition*, and the exercise of the discursive faculty in reasoning. Are we therefore to conclude, that there is no other possible method of coming at the knowledge of the truth in question? And shall we indeed indulge a scepticism concerning a truth of such consequence, of which we are at the bottom of our minds fully convinced, and about which it is impossible for us to entertain a serious doubt?

Mr. Hume found himself incapable of discovering, with certainty, that fire hath a power to consume combustibles, by those methods of investigation authorised by philosophy. But had he appealed to himself as a man of sense and judgment, he would have affirmed, upon the full authority of reason, that fire has undoubtedly

undoubtedly this power. He could not indeed destroy his scepticism concerning this important truth by those methods of reasoning practised in the schools: but had he stopped a moment, and asked himself, whether doubting of the powers of nature, the power in fire to scorch, and in water to suffocate animals; the power of elasticity in bodies that are elastic, and of self-determination in living creatures; — had he asked himself, whether doubting of the reality of these, and innumerable such like powers in nature, was not downright nonsense? he would have found himself obliged to answer in the affirmative. Mr. Hume then, by this method of inquiry, would have discovered, to his intire satisfaction, that the truth in question had, independent of reasoning, the full authority of reason or good sense; and that the opposite error fell under the censure of nonsense; and that therefore, by all the regard he owed to common sense, he was bound to admit the truth, and to dismiss, with just contempt, the opposite supposition.

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sition. As a philosopher he might hesitate; but as a man of sense he must believe: and which of the two ought to yield to the other, let any one judge. Or, waving invidious comparisons and idle disputations on this subject, Mr Hume might, and ought to have supplied the defect in philosophy from the authority of common sense.

Mr. Hume's observations on the connection of ideas are just; and all he says on the particular connections he mentions, is worthy of attention; but not to the present purpose. The question is not, Whether we actually believe the connection between cause and effect? for of that there can be no doubt; but, What reason we have to believe it? Through custom, and habitual association of ideas, we fall into many absurd ways of thinking, and also of believing, in contradiction to the plainest evidence. This is the common source of bigotry of all kinds, the most frivolous, irrational, and pernicious. It is the business of reasonable men, to prevent and correct such ways of thinking
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and belief; and it is incumbent on philosophers to assist them in so doing. By resolving the belief of a truth so fundamental as is the connection between cause and effect, into habitual association of ideas, Mr. Hume hath given countenance to the dogmatism of bigots; which he ought not, and, we presume, he did not intend, to give.

Never did school-divine perplex and puzzle himself more, or go farther from the standard of common sense, in defining the true faith, than Mr. Hume has done in his account of the simple act of belief. He employs the whole force of his genius in avoiding all regard to truth, or even probability; and seems to forget that he is describing the act of a rational mind: and so, after a long apparatus of subtile reasoning, resolves the whole into vivid perception; which is often an adjunct, but will never be allowed to constitute the essence of belief. Every one knows that he hath, or may have, a vivid, lively, forcible, firm, and steady conception, of an object which he knows to

be no reality, and which therefore he ought not, and cannot in consistency with reason, believe to be such. Every one is aware of the distinction between credulity and rational belief, and of his obligation to guard against the one, in order to a due exercise of the other. Truth, and nothing but truth, either certain or probable, can be the object of rational belief. When men believe at random, through the influence of prejudice, or habitual association of ideas, they may indeed have a vivid perception of the object of their belief, but cannot be said to act a rational part. The distinction between credulity and rational belief is real and important, and ought not to be sacrificed to any new hypothesis.

These paradoxical opinions and reasonings are commonly imputed to too great, but are indeed owing to too little, freedom of thought. Mr. Hume either ought not to have departed so boldly from the common way of thinking, or he ought to have had the courage to
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have made another bold step, by venturing beyond the limits prescribed by philosophers. He did well in pointing out the prevailing absurdity of resolving our belief of primary truths into the force of reasoning: but he would have done still better if he had resolved it into the authority of common sense.

Mr. Hume, throughout this inquiry, has overlooked that which best deserved his attention; the idea, to wit, of a fixed power or permanent principle of action, which we unavoidably get by attending to the operation of causes in producing their effects. It is impossible for one who is not an idiot, (for with regard to them, and inferior animals, the case is otherwise, as has been shewn above), to observe an elastic body act its part again and again, without conceiving that power in nature called *elasticity*, as the cause or fixed principle of action. It is impossible, in like manner, to observe inferior animals move hither and thither by the direction of their appetites, affections, and inclinations, without conceiv-

ing the idea of that self-determining power by which they act. It is no less impossible to give attention to a course of action, wise or foolish, virtuous or vicious, in human creatures, without coming to the knowledge and belief of a fixed disposition, which we consider as the cause or principle of action. If any one hath attended to such operations without arriving at the knowledge and belief of such principles of action, we do not blame the dulness or slowness of his apprehension, but, without scruple, pronounce him a fool.

Though the prevailing disposition of the human mind cannot be perceived with the same quickness and certainty with which we perceive elasticity in bodies that are elastic, yet if any one admits an uniform course of action in a human creature, and denies, at the same time, or doubts of the fixed disposition which is the cause of the action, we pronounce him a fool. If one has again and again played the knave, I do not say how often, but if with uniformity

he has deceived and disappointed you in a transaction where interest is concerned, you will be thought a fool to doubt of his being a knave; that is, to doubt his having a fixed disposition to deceive and disappoint you in some subsequent transactions. If a man has done you repeated acts of friendship, or disinterested generosity, it will not be in your power to doubt his having a friendly and a generous heart. Whatever difficulties philosophers may find in these truths, all men of sense admit them with the same ease, and with the same certainty, with which they admit what they see with their eyes, hear with their ears, or feel by their hands.

This law of nature, then, or fixed principle, we immediately perceive is that which connects the cause with the effect; and our perception and certain knowledge of this principle is the true foundation of the undoubted belief we have of that connection. We believe that a spring of steel will recover its straightness whenever the external force

which bended it is taken off; not merely because we have seen it do so again and again, but because we are persuaded of its being possessed of a power called *elasticity*, which is the cause of the action. We believe a man to be a knave or generous, not on account of his having done so many generous or knavish actions, but because we know him to be possessed of that disposition which constitutes the character. If, upon stricter inquiry, we find that the knavish or generous actions flowed not from any fixed disposition, but some foreign impulse, we change our mind, and give the person a different character, and entertain different expectations from him. In like manner, if the body which seemed to act from elasticity is found to have been impelled by some foreign power, we no longer pronounce it elastic; nor can we any longer expect from it the effects of elasticity. But it is impossible for us to admit the cause without having an expectation of its natural effect; that is, we cannot, in any consistency with common sense, believe

lieve a man to be a knave without expecting that he will do knavish actions; or to be friendly or generous, without expecting that he will do friendly and generous actions. Nor can we believe a body to be possessed of the power of elasticity, of attraction, of electricity, without expecting that it will produce the effects belonging to these principles, providing there is an opportunity given for their exertion, and no superior law of nature obstructs their exercise. Our expectation of effects is inviolably connected with the belief of the cause, or principle of action. Take away the one, the other ceases of course: but while the principle continues, the expectation of the effects must also continue. It is impossible to admit the one without admitting the other.

Mr. Hume, in conformity to the opinion of Aristotle, and his adherents, confines demonstrative evidence to the relations of ideas; and allows no more than probable evidence to the primary truths of theology, ethics, and even of physics;

fics; because, say they, there is no impossibility of conceiving an idea opposite to the latter, as there is in conceiving the opposite of the former truths. We willingly allow a difference between mathematical and other evidence, but not such as is commonly believed. It is indeed absolutely impossible to conceive that two and three should make four and not five; and we allow it is not equally impossible to conceive that lead should swim, or cork should sink in water: but affirm that it would be nonsense to expect it; nay, more, that admitting the continuance of the known laws of nature, it is absolutely impossible to form a conception of any such event. Mr. Hume puts the question, Is there any more intelligible proposition than to affirm, that all the trees flourish in December and January, and decay in May and June? We allow the proposition to be intelligible, and the assertion also to be rational upon the supposition of a change in the laws of nature: but without that supposition, we shall hardly allow the event to be

be conceivable, or shall at least pronounce the expectation of it to be absurd, foolish, and nonsensical. Did philosophers pay that regard to the authority of common sense which is due, and stand as much in awe of the imputation of nonsense as reasonable men ought to do, they would acknowledge, that the difference between the evidence for mathematical axioms, and that which we have for other primary truths, is merely circumstantial; and would be as shy of calling the last in question as the former. But philosophers unhappily have been accustomed to consider themselves as in a rank superior to men of sense, and so have indulged themselves in ways of thinking and speaking that expose them to the ridicule of mankind.

Mr. Hume affirms, that it implies no contradiction, that the course of nature may change; and that objects seemingly like those we have experienced, may be attended with different, or contrary effects. We frankly allow it. And what is yet more, that every atom in nature,
and

and all the laws belonging to it, may vanish in an instant. But shall we found any belief, any conjecture, any reasonings of any kind, upon suppositions so absolutely chimerical? There is an expostulation vulgarly used on occasion of such extravagancies: What if the heavens should fall and smother the larks? which ought to be considered as the only proper answer to objections of this kind.

Few writers have searched for truth with more acuteness, industry, and unfeigned zeal, than the ingenious author of the *Essays* above mentioned on the principles of morality and natural religion: yet few have given less satisfaction to the friends of religion than he; for this reason probably, that he came very nigh the truth, without reaching it; or departed farther from the common track of the learned than those who went before him, without settling in that principle of knowledge which would have given full satisfaction to learned and unlearned. One step farther than this philosopher hath made, would have landed him

him in common sense. But it seems he would not venture on that step ; because the authority of common sense hath not been formally acknowledged by any sect of philosophers. He has not only blamed Mr. Hume, as has been above said, but he has fully confuted him. He has, by a variety of undoubted proofs, evinced the certainty of our ideas of power or energy, or of the connection between cause and effect. But he has resolved these ideas into feeling ; and, as we have already observed, has distinguished that feeling from reason. Now, the question is, What regard ought to be had to the authority of a feeling distinct from reason ? Or how can that belief be called rational which is founded on any such feeling ? That we have many feelings in common with lower animals, that are distinct from rational perception, cannot be doubted : That we have many feelings of the animal kind that stand in direct opposition to the dictates of reason, can as little be doubted : And that it is the business of a human creature to regulate

late his animal by his rational perceptions, and to oppose, with all his might, those feelings and instinctive emotions which contradict his reason and judgment, will not be controverted. These plain truths then ought to have been carefully attended to by this author in forming his hypothesis. His zeal against Mr. Hume is laudable; because it flows from a concern for the fundamental truths of all religion, the being and perfections of God. But he ought to have considered, that a proof of these truths, founded upon mere feeling, would have little effect with rational beings. A sceptic will allow, that through the infirmity of our nature we have many feelings, and those too very strong, of Deity, and moral obligation; which however we are bound to regard no farther than they are stamped with the authority of reason. It was a pity, therefore, this ingenious author did not give the authority of reason to those feelings into which he resolves our belief of the most important truths. But he again and again dis-
claims

claims reason, as well as experience, in accounting for our idea of power or energy. Perhaps he meant only to disclaim reasoning; but it appears evidently, that he had no notion of the difference between reason and reasoning. He proceeds on Mr. Locke's hypothesis; resolves all our ideas into sensation and reflection; and finding these sources of knowledge insufficient for the discovery of the most important truths in religion and morality, he is constrained to invent a new organ of truth, which he calls *feeling*.

In accounting for our knowledge of future events, he affirms, that, unassisted by reason or experience, we have a perception or feeling of the future from the past. Is not here another instance of a feeling or perception intitled to no manner of regard from one who chuses to form a rational judgment? He says, That we are so constituted, as by a necessary determination of nature to transfer our past experience to futurity, and to have a direct perception or feeling of the

the constancy and uniformity of nature. Is not this to say, That we are absurdly constituted? and does not that assertion seem to reflect upon the author of our constitution?

That unthinking people, and indeed all who are not at due pains to keep the discerning faculty in full exercise, are apt to judge and believe without reason, and contrary to reason, as has already been taken notice of, will not be denied. But are we to charge these false judgments upon the constitution of our minds? This author takes notice, that the rich man never thinks of poverty, nor the distressed of relief. He might have added, that young people never think of old age, nor old people of death; and that the bulk of mankind live and act as if they were assured of a perpetual duration for themselves and their families. The scripture takes notice, that the hearts of the children of men are emboldened in wickedness, from a belief that they never will be punished, because they are not punished immediately. An apostle complains

complains of the scoffers of his day calling in question the last judgment, because they saw things hold on their wonted course. Follies of this kind are without number, and occur perpetually to common observation; but are chargeable, not upon the human constitution, but upon the neglect of that discernment of obvious truth, by which we are distinguished from idiots and the lower animals.

This author proves, on the received principles of philosophy, that we have no evidence for the sun's rising to-morrow, yet believe and expect it. He might, in like manner, have proved, that a man going to bed in perfect health and vigour, has no evidence for his rising in the same state to-morrow, yet believes and expects it. We do not affirm, that a man hath reason to believe one or other of these propositions. We allow that he hath reason to doubt of both; but affirm, that he is strictly bound, by the laws of reason and morality, to conduct himself in his affairs with prudence, and

ought not to slacken his diligence in discharging the duty of the day, upon any chimerical supposition of what may or may not happen to-morrow. It is true, as this author affirms, and has been constantly insisted upon by philosophers from Aristotle to the present times, that the man who goes out of his house, has no difficulty in conceiving, that it may be swallowed up by an earthquake before he returns. But men of sound understanding do not form such conceptions; or if, by random-thought, they enter into their minds, they do not suffer them to rest there, or will not allow them to have any influence upon their judgment or conduct. And we will be bold to affirm, that philosophy will never merit the esteem and attention of men of sense, till its fundamental doctrines are cleared of all fantastical as well as false suppositions.

C H A P.

C H A P. III.

The success of divines and philosophers in establishing the primary truths of religion, would have been much greater than it is, if they had betaken themselves to the authority of common sense.

THE mistakes of the learned are much to be regretted; and none more apt to mistake than they: which has given occasion to that multiplicity of opposite opinions, and contradictory systems of doctrine, by which the world has been so long divided; and to the ancient observation, That no opinion can be found so absurd that hath not the patronage of some philosopher.

Inflamed, as they often are, with zeal to overthrow some false hypothesis, they cannot always preserve the circumspection and coolness of thought necessary for discovering the almost imperceptible line of distinction between truth and

falsehood, and are thereby often betrayed into the mistake of confuting one falsehood by another; and putting forth all their force in promoting their main design, and taking fire from the rapidity of their motion, are often hurried into extremes, equally absurd, and equally hurtful, with those they labour to avoid, and are always followed by the admiring and ill-judging multitude.

With what astonishment may we now look back on the controversy between Mr. Locke and the learned of his day about innate ideas! Nothing is more evident than the difference between actually perceiving certain obvious truths, and having a power to perceive them when fairly proposed. A child is born with powers which he cannot exercise till a certain age. A grown man hath a power of perceiving many truths which he neither doth or ever will perceive, till they become the objects of his thought. There may be grown persons who have no idea of a ship, who nevertheless have eyes in their heads that would quickly
take

take up the object, with an understanding that would form some judgment of this noble machine upon observing its operations.

This obvious distinction seems to be overlooked by Mr. Locke and his opponents (as the plainest things are often overlooked by deep reasoners) throughout the whole course of their controverfy. The advocates for innate ideas considered the doctrine as fundamental to religion and virtue. Mr. Locke, on the other hand, regarded it as a manifest absurdity, and the source of many errors. Their zeal was equal, and their intentions equally good; but the management of the debate was faulty, and the consequences fatal.

The Bishop of Worcester, and his adherents, employed those arguments which prove the obviousness of primary truths, in establishing the doctrine of innate ideas: And Mr. Locke, on the other hand, not contenting himself with confuting the opinion of his adversaries, bent the whole force of his genius to weaken,

and even to destroy, the regard which had been paid to primary truths, by bringing every truth of every kind to his own standard.

Mr. Locke had the advantage of combating a gross absurdity; and being in high reputation for genius and learning, prevailed in the debate. Innate ideas were dismissed, and with them the primary truths of religion and virtue. Every doctrine of every kind must be traced by trains of reasoning to sensation and reflection. The most frivolous and impertinent cavils of sceptics and infidels must be canvassed in the same manner; and full scope is given to endless, fruitless controversies, about truths which neither require nor admit of formal proof. In the judgment of the multitude, the friends and adversaries of religion are almost on a footing; and a controversy disgraceful to the human understanding, and hurtful to the morals of mankind, is entailed on posterity.

The demonstration of the being and attributes of God, by Dr. Clarke, is a
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standing monument of great powers misapplied. For to what purpose demonstrate a truth, to the indubitable certainty of which all nature bears testimony, and, as Mr. Addison speaks, cries aloud? And why have recourse to abstract, abstruse ideas of existence, to evince attributes that appear unavoidably from an attentive survey of the face of nature? Had Dr. Clarke employed his natural good sense, which was not inferior to his learning, in setting in a true and full light the shameful absurdity of those who believe there is a God, and behave as if there was none, he would have done more service to the interests of truth and mankind, than can be done by a thousand demonstrations. But the Doctor finding himself possessed of a genius fitted for great things, and observing the great service done to natural philosophy by mathematics, was seduced by the flattering prospect of subduing the minds of sceptics and infidels by the force of demonstration.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to
 K 4 conceive

conceive reasons, relations, and fitnesses of things, independent of the things themselves; and still more difficult, if not impious, to entertain any such conceptions, without a just reference to the sovereign mind. But upon a fair representation of the proper object, it is easy to perceive, and also to feel, in some degree, relations, reasons, and fitnesses, that are obvious and interesting: and to present these objects in their native simplicity, and full force, seems to be the great business of the teachers of mankind.

We should not have taken the liberty of exposing the errors of great and good men, if they had not been attended with consequences extremely hurtful to religion and virtue; but on that account hope to be excused for animadverting on the hypothesis of Dr. Clarke. We have already observed the strong propensity men have to pass over truths that are obvious and interesting, for the sake of far-fetched discoveries of little consequence: to which we shall add this farther observation, That mankind, besides the many unavoidable

able avocations to which they are subjected, have no inclination to employ their attention on those interesting and important truths which have a tendency to touch the heart, awaken the conscience, and give no agreeable view of their temper and manners. On which account it becomes necessary to set apart an order of men, who shall make it their great study and care, to offer these truths to mankind in the most engaging and affecting light : And what a pity it is, that so many of that order, and those too of the best intentions and greatest capacity, should be diverted from a purpose so necessary and beneficial, by subtile reasoning, that hath not, and cannot have, power adequate to the design !

Shall we impute the prevalence of school-divinity to the decline of eloquence ? or shall we impute the decline of eloquence to it ? or shall we resolve both into the too little regard paid to common sense in all ages, and particularly in the darker ages of the Christian church ? We know that fine-spun reasoning came into
vogue

vogue upon the decline of eloquence; and we have seen the remaining attachment to it divert men of ability from studying the art of persuasion; and have reason to expect, that upon restoring the authority of common sense, the one study will be dropped, and the other cultivated.

A man of learning, though unskilled in the art of persuasion, can, by the dialectic art, manage truths that are disputable, to the satisfaction of men of sense; but is utterly incapable to do justice to those important and interesting truths that are obvious. He is therefore laid under a necessity of attempting an explication, or illustration of them, as it is called, and of supporting and strengthening their evidence by foreign proof: and when this is executed, as hath been done of late, in perspicuous and elegant language, accompanied with beautiful tropes and figures, and set off with all the pomp of learning, the multitude must be greatly amused and entertained, if they are not also in some degree edified.

But

But as soon as mankind come to see the absurdity of explaining what is obvious, and proving what is self-evident, and of treating the most important and interesting truths as disputable tenets, their teachers will be laid under a necessity of altering their measures, and returning to the original design of their office ; namely, to compel mankind to admit, embrace, and conform themselves to the primary truths of religion, by the art of persuasion ; an art which hath a compulsory power that does not belong to the art of reasoning ; that kind compulsion, to wit, which a wise and dutiful parent uses with his children, a tender and wise husband with his wife, and all true friends with one another ; to which we may add, that same compulsory which the Greek and Roman patriots employed in saving their state from slavery and ruin.

The ancient orators might, upon occasion, raise emotions too violent and transitory for a wise and steady conduct. But any one who looks into their writings

things will see, that in the main they have copied the same powerful address which parents use with their children, husbands with their wives, and one friend uses with another in the most interesting concerns ; and that, far from trusting to the art of reasoning, or the rules of rhetoric, they founded all their hopes of success, and laid the whole stress of the cause, where it ought always to be laid with mankind, upon the supreme authority and almost irresistible force of common sense.

From the theological writings, and even from the sermons of many divines, eminent for piety and learning, it would appear, that they considered mankind as mere intelligences, or so far rational at least as to be determined in all their actions by the decision of their judgment *,
till

* That the will always follows the last practical judgment of the understanding, hath passed current as a maxim in the schools ; so that if a sick man shall, in contradiction to his physician's judgment, and his own, indulge his appetite for meat or drink, he must be supposed previously to have convinced himself, that his present
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till Lord Shaftesbury first, and afterwards Mr. Hutcheson, pointed out other handles by which mankind may be managed, but which many good preachers are still shy to lay hold on.

Mr.

sent indulgence is of more value to him than his health, or even his life. If other men indulge their unreasonable inclinations at the expence of interest, reputation, inward peace, and everlasting salvation, they must be supposed to judge with themselves, that this vicious indulgence ought to be preferred to interest, reputation, peace of conscience, and everlasting salvation. This way of thinking, which passes so easily with the learned, goes mighty ill down with men of plain understanding; who, on the contrary, incline to believe, that in the practice of vice men either do not think at all, but act like mere animals by the blind impulse of appetite and affection; or if they attend to what they are doing, that they basely and absurdly prefer a present gratification to what they know to be their most valuable interests in this life and the next.

The truth is, that man is a compound of rational and animal affections; that without attending to himself, sometimes the one, and at other times the other, must of necessity prevail, as they happen to be strongest; and that, through the love of present pleasure, and aversion to present pain, or through mere pusillanimity, we too often decline the combat; and, in contradiction to our reason, our conscience, and all the most weighty considerations of honour and interest, respecting this life and
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Mr. Hutcheson thought that he had made a discovery of a new faculty of the human mind, which he was intitled to call by a new name, and thereby gave offence to the friends of demonstration. But in reality this acute philosopher had only got a view, and but a partial view, of common sense. Had Mr. Hutcheson taken that power of the rational mind in its true extent, his hypothesis would have been less exceptionable, and more complete; he would not have overlooked, as he has done, the perception and feeling

the next, suffer the animal to prevail over the rational affections.

For the remedy, then, of this greatest of all evils, it is not enough the judgment be well informed; because however desirous we are of having the authority of our judgment for whatever we do, and however much we will endeavour to reconcile our judgment with our inclination; yet when that cannot be done, we will too often pursue our inclination in contradiction to our judgment. The only remedy therefore under heaven is, to endeavour by all means in our power, to make our rational a match, and, as much as possible, an overmatch, for our animal affections: in which employment we have a title to all the assistance which the teachers of mankind can afford us: and to stimulate, direct, and support us in this arduous task, seems to be their chief business.

that

that mankind have of *ought* and *ought not*; nor would he have been chargeable with putting our moral sense upon a footing with our taste for gardening and architecture.

The author of the *Essays* so often mentioned above, supplies the defects of Mr. Hutcheson's hypothesis, and the oversights of all his predecessors in philosophy, by pointing out a great variety of perceptions and feelings that are of the last consequence in the government of our lives, and would have given entire satisfaction, as has been already observed, if he had not unhappily discarded the authority of reason, as well as the art of reasoning, in forming his hypothesis. But it seems the learned can never sufficiently guard themselves against that error to which mankind are so prone, of mistaking reverse of wrong for right. Philosophers of the last age resolved moral obligation into a perception, without paying due regard to that feeling of interesting truth which belongs to our nature. Philosophers of the present age
seem

seem inclined to resolve all into feeling, without due regard to that perception of the difference between obvious truth and palpable absurdity, which is the chief prerogative of our rational nature. Both are in extremes. Mankind are not such mere intelligences as to be governed by just ideas, nor such mere animals as to be directed by sensations and emotions; nor can we steer our course with safety, without the joint influence of that perception and feeling of obvious truth which completes our idea of common sense.

Lord Kames, in his *Elements of Criticism*, treating of the standard of taste, states this objection to himself, That there is no disputing about taste, taking taste in its most extensive sense: upon which objection he makes this observation, That though with regard to morals the objection is carried very far, yet acknowledges at the same time, that it seems difficult to sap its foundation, or to attack it with any success from any quarter. But if his Lordship had attended
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to the distinction between rational and animal perceptions, he would have seen, that there is no ground for the objection where morals are concerned, or that it might be easily answered. For the rational perceptions are sufficiently authorised to criticise the animal; and the animal perceptions cannot disdain to submit to the authority of the rational.

Lord Kames puts the question, Does it not seem odd, and perhaps absurd, that a man ought not to be pleased when he is, or that he ought to be pleased when he is not? No doubt it does, upon the supposition that feeling is the only source of *ought* and *ought not*, and taste the only standard of right and wrong. But upon the supposition of a perception of obvious truth peculiar to the rational kind, and distinct from taste and feeling, there is nothing odd or absurd in the matter. For nothing is more common, or more easily accounted for, than an opposition between judgment and taste. A man of sense may be pleased with bawbles to a degree that his

L judgment

judgment condemns, and not pleased with the duties of his station to the degree his judgment approves. A man of sense and virtue may condemn the excessive joy he feels upon a sudden elevation, or a too great dejection of spirit upon a disappointment.

He is a happy man indeed whose taste corresponds exactly to his rational perceptions. But this happiness is seldom to be met with ; and, in full perfection, seems not consistent with the present state of human nature. Our business at present is, to correct our instinctive emotions and affections by our rational perceptions ; and, by repeated efforts, to bring the one to such conformity with the other, that upon a change of situation, we may be found qualified for that complete enjoyment of virtue and happiness for which we were originally designed, and to which we naturally aspire.

Overlooking this standard placed within us, to which we ought to recur, and on which we may depend, Lord Kames, with other philosophers, goes abroad to
seek

seek another and better standard of judgment in the general sentiments and common practice of mankind, and meets with the same disappointment which all will meet with who take this course. He is soon obliged to give up all pretence to universality, and to search for his standard in the sentiments of chosen individuals. He therefore sets aside savages, and appeals to the civilized: He declines the majority of the civilized, and makes a selection of proper judges: He is forced at last to betake himself to emotions and feelings peculiar to those of cultivated taste. But his Lordship does not advert, that these feelings and emotions, if not checked and corrected by rational perception, will degenerate into vice and folly, even in those of the best and most cultivated taste.

Singularities, absurdities, and follies, of men of cultivated taste, are no secret. They often make a considerable part of the entertainment of the stage, and appear in common life with force sufficient to shock men of sense. By an injudicious

compliance with the sentiments and manners of those of refined taste, we shall in some instances become as ridiculous, and in others as vicious, as we should be by copying the sentiments and manners of mere savages. To form our judgment by this standard in the concerns of religion and virtue, would be extremely hazardous. Nay, we cannot be true to these interests, without being much upon our guard against so dangerous a guide. People of rank and fashion in our day, it is alledged, are more observant of the respect due to one another, than of the reverence due to Almighty God. How then shall one secure his piety, if he suffers himself to be governed by so bad a standard, and does not with continual application correct feelings and emotions which will too readily be raised in him by such corrupt models, and form his taste by rational perception? So here is a considerable defect in his Lordship's hypothesis, occasioned by his laying too much stress on sentiments and emotions, and paying too little regard to that perception

ception of obvious truth and palpable absurdity, peculiar to the rational kind, called *common sense*.

Mr. Smith, in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ought, and might, almost every where have put common sense in place of sympathy; because his many excellent observations on human life, and human nature, correspond exactly with it, and derive all their force from its authority. One cannot conceive how our hearts should beat unisons with one another in so many instances as he has taken notice of, if they were not framed and regulated by one common standard. The inferior animals sympathise with one another, because their thoughts and sentiments (if I am allowed the expression) have one common standard: but they do not sympathise with us; and what is more, they do not sympathise with animals of a different tribe, on account of the different standard by which their sentiments are formed.

That human hearts have a tendency to harmonize with each other, is a truth

deserving all the attention claimed to it: but from the just and lively representations this excellent writer hath given of the manifold absurdities, in opinion and practice, resulting from a too strong tendency to follow this direction, we may easily see the wretched condition mankind would be in, if they were not furnished with another, and a better standard.

The tempers and manners of others are, no doubt, a mirror in which we may see the right and wrong of conduct with more ease, and perhaps more clearly, than in our own. But those observations would avail us nothing, if we could not try them by the standard of truth within ourselves. An idiot, however attentive to the temper and manners of others, and however much affected by them, cannot reach an idea of right and wrong; because he is incapable of that perception of truth peculiar to the rational mind.

The alledged ignorance of morality in one brought up in a desert island, affords
no

no argument against the perception insisted on, any more than the ignorance of colours in one brought up in a dungeon is an argument against his faculty of seeing. We have powers of various kinds which are of no use till they are put into exercise, and which cannot be put into exercise till their proper objects are presented. Should we allow, what cannot be affirmed with certainty, that one brought up in a desert island could have no idea of right and wrong, till he became acquainted with the temper and manners of others; still those ideas so obtained, ought to be resolved into the power of rational perception, by which he pronounces upon the object presented; as we resolve the idea of beauty and deformity derived from a picture, or any other work of art, into a certain discernment or skill in judging one is possessed of, and without which he could not perceive either the one or the other.

Of late hath appeared, *An inquiry into the human mind, on the principles of common sense*, by Dr. Reid; in which he

gives such an account of the operation of our powers, as shews it to be impossible for a rational being to doubt the reality of the objects of sense; and gives us ground to expect, from a farther pursuit of his inquiry, such a display of the powers of the human mind, as will render it impossible for any one to doubt of the obvious truths of religion and virtue, without being convicted of folly or madness: So that the triumph of truth over error, and of true science over false philosophy, may not be very distant.

While we complain of the learned not paying all the regard to common sense that is due, we ought to rejoice in the regard they have paid to it. Their different systems derive all their success from that source; and would have been still more successful and permanent, if they had betaken themselves to it alone. Their gradual approaches to this standard ought to give pleasure. Nor ought we to repine that their approaches are gradual and slow. Let it not be forgot, that learning in modern times sets out, not
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from simplicity of thought, but from a species of science more pernicious to the interests of truth, and hurtful to the human understanding, than the grossest ignorance; and that to unlearn this false science, requires more time, and more vigorous efforts of genius, than to bring the various branches of knowledge to their highest perfection. Upon the whole, we are arrived at a period in which, if it is not our own fault, we may dismiss frivolous controversies, and settle in the belief of primary truths upon the most solid foundation.

B O O K IV.

Common sense perceives and pronounces upon all primary truths, with the same indubitable certainty with which we perceive and pronounce on objects of sense by our bodily organs.

C H A P. I.

Rational beings perceive and pronounce on many realities in nature, which being no objects of sense, are hid from the irrational.

HITHERTO man hath been represented as a reasoning rather than a rational animal. Philosophers having furnished him with a variety of sensations, external and internal, in common with the lower animals, have superadded a power of comparing, compound-
ing,

ing, dividing, and abstracting these his sensations, and deducing consequences from them; in which power they have placed the chief, if not the sole, excellency of the human mind: to which account of things we cannot agree. We acknowledge the powers to be real, and own our obligations to those great men who have pointed out their use and excellence; but will by no means allow that they make the whole of rationality, or are the sole, or even the chief characteristic of the human mind. A great deal hath been already said about the ill consequences of overlooking the judging power, or of giving the discursive faculty the preference to it. But too much can hardly be said to persuade mankind to put less confidence in the faculty of reasoning, and more in the faculty of judgment, than they commonly do.

Mr. Locke, who led modern philosophers into this wrong way of thinking, appears however not satisfied about reasoning being the characteristic of rationality. Though he seems to overlook
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the distinction between reason and reasoning in tracing the origin of our ideas, yet he points it out clearly enough when he speaks of madmen, idiots, and brutes, in contradistinction to rational beings. He affirms, that brutes exercise their reasoning faculty; but only on particular ideas, just as they receive them from their senses. He also allows the exercise of this faculty to idiots; but only a little imperfectly about things present, and very familiar to their senses. Speaking of madmen, he expresses himself thus:

“ They do not appear to me to have lost
 “ the faculty of reasoning; but having
 “ joined together some ideas very wrong-
 “ ly, they mistake them for truths, and
 “ err as men do who argue right from
 “ wrong principles. Having by the vio-
 “ lence of their imagination taken their
 “ fancies for realities, they make deduc-
 “ tions from them.” Mr. Locke would
 surely exclude idiots and madmen, as
 well as brutes, from the rank of rational
 beings; and yet, you see, he allows
 them the faculty of reasoning: from
 whence

whence it is evident, that, in his judgment, reasoning is not the characteristic of rationality. Let us then, with the consent and approbation of this great philosopher, as we otherwise ought, search for this characteristic.

It may be doubted whether brutes have a consciousness of their existence, or such consciousness as rational beings have. The sagacity they discover in the preservation of their lives, will not amount to any proof of consciousness; because we do many things with equal sagacity, both sleeping and awake, without consciousness. It is probable they have not the same idea with us of personal identity: but yet we cannot fix this as the characteristic distinction; because they certainly have a capacity of comparing themselves with all the objects around them, and of judging and reasoning upon the comparison, similar, if not the same with what we have.

Idiots and brutes seem to have no perception of the beauty arising from harmonious proportion and just design, which
makes

makes a considerable part of the entertainment of a rational mind. They are pleased with shapes and sounds that exhilarate their animal spirits. They may also derive a satisfaction from the arrangement of colours, sounds, and also of external forms, of which we have no idea; but seem utterly insensible of those pleasures of sense which are deemed elegant and rational. Here then is a distinction worthy of notice; because it is not merely of degree, but of kind. Yet we cannot stop here: For besides that the perception of such external beauties seems to depend as much, if not more, upon a particular conformation of the organ of sense, than on the power of rationality, (as is evident in the case of an ear for music), the highest perfection of such discernment, however rational it may be deemed, falls short in dignity, as well as use, of those perceptions by which we are distinguished from the lower animals; which ought therefore to come under consideration.

That a whole is greater than a part,

and that all the parts are equal to a whole, with many other such like truths, are objects of obvious perception to us, and known with the same certainty with which we perceive that marble is hard, that wool is soft, and that milk is white; but cannot be apprehended by irrational beings, or cannot at least be made principles of reasoning to them as they are to us. But yet we do not chuse to stop here, as the bulk of philosophers seem to have done; and for this plain reason, that inferior animals share in this power beyond what is commonly thought.

It is worthy of notice, that a dog, an idiot, or a child under age, know by sight the difference between a whole and its parts, and judge, reason, and act upon it in the same manner we do. Take away a part of the ordinary allowance of food you give to a dog or a child, and he grumbles, and will not accept of it: Restore the part you took away, and complete his ordinary allowance, he is then satisfied, and accepts of it. He hath, you see, as far as his senses carry him,
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the same idea of the difference between a whole and a part which you have, and reasons upon it in the same manner ; only, as Mr. Locke says, a little imperfectly. Perhaps on due inquiry we might find, that inferior animals reason sometimes not imperfectly, but with great acuteness and compass of thought, about present things, and objects familiar to their senses. Very probably the whole conduct of their lives, and those actions especially which raise our wonder, may flow from a power of comparing, compounding, dividing, and perhaps abstracting, those ideas which they derive from sensation, as we do. So that reflection upon our sensations cannot be considered as the sole or chief distinction between us and the lower animals.

When we think on the instinct of brutes, and contemplate that amazing contrivance, and consummate skill, with which they act under its direction, we are tempted to drop all claim of superiority, and assume them to the rank of rational beings; and they would be well intitled

utterly ignorant, and we are the spectators, and we only are the judges of that perfection of design by which they act. Nature hath furnished them with powers sufficient for all the purposes of their existence. But rational beings are designed for higher purposes, and distinguished therefore, and dignified, by powers specifically different from theirs. The meanest artist of the human kind knows more of what he is about than the most sagacious animal. He sees the right, and he sees the wrong; and corrects and regulates his conduct by a perception and judgment of things of which inferior animals are utterly incapable. This perception, then, and judgment, will, upon the strictest inquiry, be found to be the characteristic of rationality.

Mr. Locke seems to make the power of abstraction the characteristic of rationality. His words are, "This I think I may be positive in, that the power of abstracting is not at all in them," (he means the inferior animals), "and that the having of general ideas is that
" which

“ which puts a perfect distinction be-
 “ twixt men and brutes, and is an ex-
 “ cellency which the faculties of brutes
 “ do by no means attain to.” Mr. Locke
 is here guilty of a capital oversight. There
 is another faculty which makes a yet
 more perfect distinction between men and
 brutes ; the faculty, to wit, of perceiving
 and pronouncing upon the connection
 which subsists between qualities and
 powers, and the subject to which they
 belong ; of which faculty if the brutes
 were possessed, there seems no ground to
 doubt of their power of abstracting oc-
 casionally these qualities and powers in
 the same manner we do. The lower a-
 nimals, on seeing snow, milk, or chalk,
 have an idea of whiteness, by their ex-
 ternal organ of sight, as perfect as ours ;
 and will govern their actions by such
 like ideas with a sagacity not inferior to
 ours. But of whiteness being a quality
 belonging to milk, chalk, or any other
 subject, they have no idea at all ; because
 they have no such ideas of subjects and
 qualities, and of the connection of the

one with the other, as we have, and therefore cannot abstract the one from the other as we do.

Mr. Locke ascribes the want of language in brutes to their not having the power of abstraction. He ought to have ascribed it to their not having those ideas that are expressed by our language. It is true, as he observes, that the want of language in brutes is not owing chiefly to a defect in their organs ; for it is well known, that they are endued with organs capable of forming a variety of sounds sufficient to convey such ideas as they have. But had they the same organs with us, they could not with judgment and propriety use those words which we use ; because they neither have nor can conceive the ideas they convey. Nouns and verbs are the chief constituent parts of all language. Nouns are either expressive of certain qualities belonging to certain subjects, and so are called *adjectives* ; or of certain subjects to which certain qualities belong, and so are called *substantive nouns*. Verbs are expressive of certain powers of action
in

in certain subjects, and so are called *active*; or of suffering the operation of these powers, and so are called *passive verbs*. But now, of all those ideas intended to be conveyed by these expressions, brutes are totally ignorant, and absolutely incapable; and so are incapable of acquiring our language. Having a perception and judgment of all the objects of sense equal to ours, they will by that direction fly an apparent danger with a sagacity not inferior to ours; and having a capacity of forming a variety of sounds corresponding to their ideas, they will, with equal sagacity, give warning of danger to their young, and to their associates, in what may be called their own language: but having no idea of any realities that are not the objects of sense, it is impossible they should hold any correspondence with us, or with one another, in any such language as is used by human creatures.

A dog or child, being once burned, will shun the fire with equal timidity and caution; but with this difference,

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that

that the child soon gets acquainted with the invisible powers of fire, and will, through wantonness or malice, employ them to burn others, which a dog does not. A dog will run at the sight of the knife which hath cut his tail, or cropped his ears. A child, in like manner, will fly from instruments that threaten to hurt him; but getting soon acquainted with the powers of edge-tools, and other dangerous instruments, he is eager to use them, which a dog never attempts. Let a child and a dog be kept together in the same family, have equal access to the kitchen and cellar, and have equal opportunities of observing what passes in all the repositories of pleasant food and liquors; let the brute be otherwise as sagacious, or more sagacious if you will, than the child, yet can they not be trusted with equal safety: for the child will find a variety of ways of coming at the gratification of his appetites which the dog knows not. The dog may be as quick-sighted, and no less observant, more nimble, more active, and rapacious,

cious, than the child; and as far as his eye, and other external senses, direct him, may be more successful in catching his prey: but the child having, by observation, informed himself of many of the laws of nature, and particularly those of mechanism, which are hid from the brute, will turn keys, open locks, and use a great variety of arts suggested to him by his superior knowledge, which the dog never attempts. Shut up a dog and a child prisoners in the same chamber, and the difference of their knowledge will immediately appear. The attempts of the one will be few and simple, and such only as he is directed to by the immediate perception of his external organs. The attempts of the other will be various and complicated, in proportion to the acquaintance he hath got with the powers and qualities of things. It is worthy of notice, that brutes never thrust one another over precipices, into ponds or rivers, or into fire. They may do it by accident, but never through mirth or malice, as children often do; because

they have not those ideas of the laws of nature which children have. It is further worthy of notice, that children are not satisfied with the knowledge they get of objects by their external senses, but begin very early to search for those qualities and powers which are not the objects of sense. What is it, Mamma? Will it bite? Will it do this and that? are common questions with very young children. And so curious and prying they are into these subjects, that they often rashly ascribe powers of life and action to inanimate things: and before they have quit that state which we call *non-age*, they have stored their minds with ideas of invisible powers and qualities, and also give names to those ideas; which things are never done, nor once attempted, by inferior animals, through that incapacity they are under of perceiving any other realities in nature besides those that are the immediate objects of sense,

People who never enter into these subjects, or not with the care and attention they deserve, are apt to ascribe the same ideas

ideas of the powers of nature to the lower animals by which we are distinguished. But a little attention to the facts above mentioned, and many others of the kind, which continually occur, would undeceive them. Inferior animals fly things of hurtful appearance, and pursue objects of pleasure and conveniency, with a sagacity and earnestness, as if they really knew those powers in nature by which they may be profited or hurt. But that they know them not in the manner we do, and indeed that they can have no idea of them at all, appears from hence, that, as is said before, they never make the least attempt to employ these powers in their favour. There are numberless occasions on which inferior animals could relieve themselves from danger, and from death, if they had the least notion of many powers in nature which they could easily lay hold of. There is an infinity of occasions of gratifying their inclinations, their vindictive and mischievous inclinations in particular, which they do not lay hold of; because
they

they have not the least notion of those invisible powers in nature by which these inclinations might easily be gratified. Who doubts that many of the inferior animals, under deep provocation, would burn houses, and do other dreadful acts of mischief, if they had the least idea of the power in fire to consume combustibles? And who can doubt that numbers of them have sagacity enough to employ that single power in nature to various purposes of pleasure, and conveniency, if they had the smallest conception of that power? But assuredly they have no such conception. Or if any of the brutes appear to have perceptions resembling those of the human kind, they must be considered as singularities, or allowed to approach as near to us in rationality as they do in these perceptions. For if we know any thing at all of the specific difference between our understanding and that of inferior animals, it must consist in our having perceptions of truths which are imperceptible to them.

Mr. Pope calls the elephant *half-reasoning*,

ing, and seems to think that monkies come as near to us as Sir Isaac Newton did to superior intelligencies. And indeed it is probable, that things of different species are separated from each other by a single line, and that a small one; or may run into each other so as not to be distinguished by our utmost skill. Perhaps a brute of the highest sagacity approaches nearer to the lowest of the human kind, than the lowest of the human kind does to Sir Isaac Newton. But that can create no difficulty to men of true judgment. To trace with accuracy the various degrees of understanding in the different classes of intelligent beings, and to observe how nearly they approach to each other, would afford an entertainment of real use, as well as of high delight, without any danger of destroying that difference which is called *specifical*.

If white and black mix and unite

A thousand ways, is there no black and white?

Of such realities as are the immediate objects of any or of all their senses, inferior

rior animals have clear and true ideas. These ideas they treasure up in their memories with great exactness, and by these ideas they conduct themselves with great sagacity; I had almost said, wisdom. But beyond that they cannot go. A horse will shun the place in which he was bemired; he will not come near it; or if he is forced, he will approach it trembling, because he well remembers the painful struggle he had in getting out of it. The inconveniency he felt, he remembers; and that remembrance is a sufficient direction to the principle of self-preservation which influences him, without any farther knowledge of the subject. Birds who have never seen fire-arms, take no alarm: but those who have been wounded, or seen others killed or wounded by them, will fly their flight, without having the least notion of those powers by which they become hurtful. A dog will run to his master, a horse or an ox to his keeper, by the mere remembrance of the kind treatment they have given them; and all animals will run
cheerfully

cheerfully to those vessels in which they have been accustomed to receive their food, by the mere direction of sensation, reflection, association of ideas, and habit of thinking, without any farther knowledge of what they are about. In a word, inferior animals are perfect masters of that kind of knowledge which Mr. Hume allows to the human kind, in accounting for their belief of power or energy, and the connection between cause and effect. But that we are distinguished by a set of ideas, and system of knowledge, specifically different from theirs, might, without more ado, be appealed to the breast of every man who is above the rank of an idiot, were it not that the errors of the learned lay us under a necessity of giving them in detail.

C H A P. II.

By the discernment peculiar to rational beings, called common sense, we perceive all primary truths in the same manner as we perceive objects of sense by our bodily organs.

WE must be excused for looking into this subject with some care, and showing some concern to preserve our rank and dignity, when so many of our own species, with a preposterous zeal, employ all the arts of sophistry to reduce us to a level with the brutes, and thereby to deprive us of the chief source of our glory and happiness, religion and virtue.

We have seen that rational beings are distinguished from the irrational, not so much by the discursive faculty, as by a perception and judgment of certain obvious truths, which for quickness, clearness, and indubitable certainty, is called
sense;

sense ; and on account of its being possessed in some degree by all the rational kind, is called *common sense*. Let us then proceed to take into consideration certain perceptions peculiar to the rational mind, that give the same information of primary truths which our bodily organs give of the objects of sense.

It is not the eye that sees colours, nor the ear that judges of sounds, nor do the fingers feel, nor doth the palate distinguish between sweet and bitter : but it is the soul itself, or, if you will, the man himself, who by the help of these organs performs these acts, and enjoys these perceptions. But these are not the only perceptions that rational beings are capable of. Besides the perceptions we have in common with the lower animals, we are possessed of perceptions of undoubted realities which they have not, and of which they are incapable.

Along with the perceptions of hard, smooth, hot, cold, which we have by the sense of feeling, we get, and cannot avoid, the idea of something which is

hot, cold, rough, or smooth : which something, being no object of sense, does not enter into the minds of idiots and the lower animals. By the external organ of sight we have the same perception of bodies in motion which idiots and the lower animals have : but by the intellectual sight, we apprehend motion itself ; which idiots and the lower animals do not. Six billiard-balls being placed in a line, we see not only the impulse given the first, and the motion performed by the last, but we clearly perceive the communication of motion from the first to the last, and see in a manner motion run through the whole.

We see it in a manner, because we perceive it as distinctly, and with as great certainty, as we do those realities which are the objects of external sense. By observing the propensity in heavy bodies to descend, we have, and cannot avoid having, the idea of some law or power in nature which creates the propensity, and is the cause of the descent : as by observing the progress of corn and other vegetables,

tables, we not only perceive the change they undergo, as other animals do, but also that other law in nature called *vegetation*, which is the cause of the change ; which law is unknown, and absolutely imperceptible, to idiots and the lower animals. By attending to the motions of animals, we soon form the idea of an invisible being who performs these motions, sees by the eye, hears by the ear, and is susceptible of pleasure and pain ; of which invisible being idiots and the lower animals have no idea at all ; as by turning our attention to those of our own species we get a new set of ideas, arising from a new set of actions, of which idiots and the lower animals are incapable. Along with the figure of a man there comes into our mind the idea of a being of superior excellence, who becomes the object of love and esteem in proportion to the goodness and dignity of his temper and actions ; as by contemplating the harmony of the universe, and observing the gracious and wise design which reigns in the whole, we have

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and cannot avoid having, the idea of a great, and wise, and good being, the author and conductor of the whole ; who, though invisible to our external senses, is intitled to our supreme esteem and affection.

Here then are two orders or classes of perceptions ; those, to wit, we have in common with other animals, and which we shall therefore call *animal perceptions* ; and those peculiar to the rational kind, which shall be called *rational perceptions*. The distinction is real, important, and worthy the attention of all who look into the human mind. And the not attending to these different perceptions, or having at best but imperfect and confused ideas of them, will be found one of the chief sources of that confusion and uncertainty which curious people have laboured under in the judgment they form of the primary truths of religion.

We do not affirm, that the manner of perceiving the objects either of animal or rational perception is precisely the same
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in every instance. We allow that there is a sensible difference between one animal perception and another, as there is between one rational perception and another. But we affirm, that whatever difference there may be in the individuals of either of the above-mentioned classes, they will be found to agree so exactly in some one common characteristic, as renders it easy to reduce each perception of the animal or rational kind to its proper class.

With regard to animal perceptions, taste and smell have an affinity to each other, but are different ; and the perception by feeling differs from both. The perception of colours by the eye, and of sounds by the ear, have scarce any resemblance or affinity ; and seem not only to differ among themselves, but to be very different from all our other perceptions. Nevertheless, all these perceptions, however different in other respects, agree in this, that the things perceived, being immediate objects of external sense, are accordingly perceptible to all those

animals who are possessed of these organs of sense ; and therefore are with great propriety called *animal perceptions*.

With regard to the other class of perceptions, the ideas we receive of the relations of numbers and quantity differ from our ideas of substance and essence. Our perceptions of gravitation and vegetation differ from each other, and still more from our perception of animal life ; and that differs much from our perception of moral excellence and wise design ; as indeed all our rational perceptions must be very different from the perception we have of God, and his adorable perfections. But all these perceptions, however different in other respects, agree in this, that the things perceived, being no object of external sense, are not perceived by mere animals. They are indeed conveyed to the mind by the help of sensible objects, and result from a due attention to them : but not being themselves the objects of sense, they do not fall within the sphere of idiots and lower animals, are objects only of the rational mind,

mind, and therefore the ideas we have of them are fitly called *rational perceptions*.

We do not affirm, that all who are above the level of idiots or brutes are actually possessed of the above-mentioned rational perceptions; but are capable of admitting them on having the objects which convey them fairly presented to the mind. One cannot have the idea of motion, without once and again attending to bodies in motion. Nor can you have any idea of self-determination, without being well acquainted with the motions performed by animals; nor of the essential difference between virtue and vice, without understanding and entering into the views and motives of the agent. You cannot form any idea of vegetation, by barely looking at a vegetable, without attending to the change it undergoes, and marking the progress of its growth. You cannot form any idea of God, by gazing upon his works, without observing their tendency, and entering, as far as your faculties will carry you, into his great, wise, and gracious plan.

We are far from affirming, that all who are above the level of brutes and idiots have the rational perceptions in the same degree; but that they are capable of them in proportion to the degrees of rationality of which they are possessed. As the degrees of quickness and strength of animal perceptions are wonderfully diversified in animals, according to the good or bad state of their external organs of sense; so are the degrees of rational perceptions as much diversified in rational beings, according to the quickness, strength, and extent of the rational powers. This only we would affirm, that amidst all these varieties of perceptions of the rational and animal kind, the essential difference between one endued with reason, and a brute or an idiot, is still preserved, and may be easily discovered.

Whether brutes are capable of forming a syllogism on what they perceive by their senses, hath been long treated as a problem in the schools. But that they have no notion of these realities above mentioned, which are not the objects of sense,

sense, is, we hope, abundantly evident from what hath been already observed on the specifical difference between our powers and theirs, and cannot be made a subject of dispute with any degree of plausibility. By all the observations we make on them, and all the trials we can put them to, we cannot find their having the least notice of the operations of nature beyond what is conveyed to them by their external senses. Had they any idea of the laws of nature, and the author of those laws, such as rational beings have, they could not fail to make some proficiency, however small, in the arts and sciences, and become subservient to the execution of various useful purposes in life; of all which we know they are utterly incapable. By having ideas of matter and motion, of gravitation, cohesion of parts, and elasticity, they would be possessed of the principles of mechanics; by knowing the relations of numbers and quantity, they might acquire some knowledge of mathematics; by perceiving the law of vegetation, they

might be taught many useful lessons in gardening and agriculture; and by perceiving the distinction between virtue and vice, with our dependence on Deity, they could not avoid some knowledge of theology, ethics, and civil policy. In short, their knowledge would be the same in kind, though different in degree from ours. We might enjoy a superiority such as a Newton, a Bacon, a Locke, hath above the most ignorant and stupid of the rational kind; but they would nevertheless be partakers with us of rationality, if they had the same perceptions of primary truths that we have. These perceptions, then, and not the skill of reasoning, are our chief excellency, and the chief, if not the sole distinction, between us and the lower animals.

Will it be necessary to prove, that we actually have those perceptions we have called *rational*? How we come by them, hath been much disputed, and will afterwards be inquired into. But that we have such perceptions, or are susceptible of them upon the object being fairly presented

sented to the mind, will, we hope, be admitted without a formal proof: And, in truth, the going about to demonstrate such indubitable realities would be extremely ridiculous. Shall we prove, that carpenters and masons have ideas of gravitation, and cohesion of parts? or that husbandmen and gardeners have an idea of the law of vegetation? that divines and philosophers perceive the being of God, and of moral excellence? or that legislators have any idea of those laws by which human beings regulate their conduct? These realities are indeed no objects of sense, nor deducible by reasoning from those that are: but yet they are perceived, believed, and proceeded upon, as undoubted realities, by all mankind, in all ages and nations. Shall we demonstrate, that men believe truths on which all the arts and sciences are founded, and on the belief of which they act without hesitation in all the most momentous concerns of life? Or shall we prove that men have ideas of what they believe, and cannot admit that as true of which they

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have

have no idea? Perhaps the ideas which many artists have of those laws or powers of nature, are faint, obscure, and confused; but they are real. Perhaps many knowing men, and possibly some of the learned, do not reflect on the ideas they have of the invisible powers of nature; but that they have them, and at the bottom of their minds are fully convinced of their reality, will easily appear upon a little attention to their way of thinking and acting. The obscurity or confusion of thought they may labour under, does not derogate in the least from the truth or certainty of what they believe.

Mr. Locke affirms, that our ideas of matter are imperfect and obscure. It were to be wished that he had clearly pointed out that imperfection and obscurity: for whatever it is, it will be found to belong to all our ideas of truths which are not the objects of external sense. And from his way of speaking, people may suspect that our ideas of these truths labour under a degree of uncertainty proportioned to what he calls
their

their imperfection and obscurity. But that is far from being the case. In many other subjects, uncertainty is the consequence of imperfection and obscurity of ideas; but not so with regard to primary truths. Our conception of primary is totally different from that of other truths; and this difference hath probably been overlooked by this great man.

When we see an object, a castle for instance, a ship, or a horse, at too great a distance, or through an improper or bad medium, our ideas are imperfect and obscure; and our knowledge of the object, and belief concerning it, are liable of course to a proportional degree of uncertainty. We believe it is a castle or a ship; but because of the imperfection and obscurity of our ideas, we may be mistaken, and often are so. In like manner, when another man's thoughts are conveyed to me in terms which I do not thoroughly understand, or when through any casual defect I am incapable of comprehending fully the meaning of him who writes or speaks, my ideas are
imperfect

imperfect and obscure; and in proportion to that obscurity and imperfection is the uncertainty of my knowledge, and liableness to mistake. But no such uncertainty attends our knowledge or belief of the primary truths. Whatever imperfection or obscurity may be charged upon our ideas of matter or motion, of gravitation, or cohesion of parts, or of any other of the fundamental laws of nature, it is impossible to doubt of their existence. We may not have direct, vivid, and forcible perceptions of these, as we have of other objects; but we have the firmest and most unshaken belief of their reality; for belief and vivid perception are very different things, and flow from different causes.

Those realities which are the objects of sense, make a sensible impression, and leave traces in the brain that are sensible, which other realities of equal certainty do not. The idea of a horse is the picture of that animal which enters into the mind through the organ of sight. This picture we have not only when we
see

see the animal, but after we have shut our eyes ; and do retain, and can recall for many days after. But no such thing happens in our conception of those primary truths which are not the objects of sense. And if by *idea* is meant a lively trace, a sensible impression and picture in the brain, it may be allowed, that we have no idea at all of those realities which are not objects of sense. We surely cannot contemplate vegetation, gravitation, cohesion of parts, or the law of elasticity in bodies that are elastic, as we do a ball or a cylinder. We cannot form an idea, that is, a picture, of the one, as we do of the other ; nor can we by reflection have recourse to the picture of the one as we may to the other. In all these respects our ideas of the one may be called more obscure and imperfect, but are not therefore more doubtful or uncertain, than of the other. The manner of conceiving is quite different, as has been said, but the evidence attending our conception of both objects is the same. For a man in his senses

senses can as little doubt of the reality of vegetation, as he can doubt the reality of the tree or shrub which he sees with his eyes, and feels with his hand. However philosophers may amuse themselves with questions upon these subjects, a man of plain understanding will reckon him delirious who entertains the least doubt of the primary truths of nature. And we hope to make appear, that whoever doubts the primary truths of religion is liable to the same charge.

C H A P. III.

Primary truths of religion and morality are as much objects of common sense as other primary truths.

WE do not imagine that mankind will ever be so silly as to give over planting and building, or grow remiss in any of the necessary or useful arts of life, from a suspicion of the primary truths of nature. But we suspect that

that many have given up religion, or have grown remiss in the discharge of its duties, through a certain degree of scepticism concerning its primary truths. And though this scepticism is perhaps more the pretended than real cause of their impiety, it may not be improper to take the primary truths of religion into consideration, and to show, that, with respect to their evidence, they are upon a footing with other primary truths; and that we act as much below the dignity of our rational nature, and approach as near to the level of brutes and idiots, in doubting of them, as we would do in doubting of other primary truths.

Lay open a machine of the simplest kind, or plan of conduct of easiest conception, to an idiot, and he will not be able to comprehend it, because he is an idiot. Describe the parts, point out the connection, and explain the manner of operation with your utmost skill, and he is nothing the wiser; because he is destitute of that power by which such objects are apprehended. He may learn from

his external senses to observe the operations of machinery, and to guard against effects that are hurtful ; but of the relation between means and end, between cause and effect, of contrivance and wise design, he hath no idea at all, nor is he susceptible of any.

Lay open a machine, or plan of conduct, to the meanest of the rational kind, and if the object is not too complex, and does not require a quickness, steadiness, and compass of thought, beyond what he is master of, he will enter immediately into the design, and admire the skill of the author. Put a peasant, or, if you will, a savage, upon observing how well his eye is fitted for seeing, his ear for receiving sounds, his hands for working, and his limbs for walking ; how admirably the birds are furnished for flying, the fishes for swimming, and the land animals for a great variety of necessary and useful purposes ; bid him observe the regular return of day and night, of summer and winter, of seed-time and harvest, and how, by the regular influence
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of the sun, the rains, and the winds, this earth is replenished with corn and grass for the comfortable subsistence of so great a variety of living creatures; and desire him to take particular notice how the succession of these animals is continued from generation to generation, by the regular birth of males and females: — point out a number of such obvious facts to the meanest of the human kind, and desire him to revolve them in his thoughts, and he will be filled with admiration and astonishment. Ask him what he thinks of the power, the wisdom, and goodness of him who made, upholds, and conducts the mighty plan; and he will, without hesitation, pronounce them all to be immense. Here then is a judgment of things of which irrational beings are incapable, through the want of that faculty by which we are distinguished from them.

Idiots and the lower animals are as incapable of pronouncing on the conduct of mankind as on the œconomy of providence: for the good and ill qualities of

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moral

moral agents, which are objects of simple perception to the rational, are as much beyond the reach of irrational beings as the attributes of God. A footman follows his master from day to day ; a dog does the same. Both are spectators and witnesses of his actions ; but the one apprehends, and the other is utterly ignorant of his plan of conduct. The footman, if he goes beyond his depth, may be as far from the truth as the dog : but keeping to what is obvious, he will discern at first sight what is the effect of design, and what of caprice ; and what actions of his master are worthy of praise, and what of blame. The obvious relations between his master and the several members of his family, the obvious obligations arising from these relations, with the fulfillment or violation of them, which are out of the sight of mere animals, are to him objects of simple perception and judgment, in the same manner as the shape and size and external figure of his master, are an object to the dog ; and he pronounces as clearly and

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certainly

certainly on the one as the dog does on the other.

Besides those instinctive emotions and feelings above mentioned, which we have in common with the lower animals, every individual of the human kind hath a perception which idiots and the inferior animals have not, of what he owes to himself, to his offspring, to his friends and benefactors, to his country, and to his God. These sacred obligations, which have been subjects of dispute with the learned, are objects of simple perception and judgment to men of sense, as the figure and size of bodies are to idiots and the lower animals.

Besides the blind propensity in common with inferior animals to do every thing conducive to our safety and happiness, we have a clear perception that it is reasonable, just, and right so to do, accompanied with a rational satisfaction on the fulfillment, and a no less rational dissatisfaction with ourselves on the neglect or violation of this obligation, which inferior animals have not. To

the reality of this perception every one's experience bears full testimony. Will it be necessary to mention the torment of those who have thrown away their estates at play, (a torment so nearly resembling that of the damned), in proof of our being possessed of this perception of what we owe to ourselves, and of our accusing or excusing ourselves upon the fulfillment or non-fulfillment of the obligation? That this perception is not merely animal, appears from hence, that in rational beings it is stronger or weaker in proportion to the strength or weakness of their rational powers.

Besides the instinctive impulse to interpose for the safety of our offspring in common with inferior animals, every mother of the human kind hath a clear conviction and intuitive view of her duty to do so, which the inferior animals have not. And what deserves notice, she hath this perception of duty not only in conjunction with the instinctive impulse, but sometimes unconnected with it, and independent of it. She sometimes plainly

ly perceives the one when she does not feel the other ; and by the exercise of the rational perception puts the animal feeling into motion.

Besides the instinctive inclination we have in common with other animals to associate with those of our kind, and to lend them our friendly assistance, we have an intuitive view of the moral excellence of this disposition, our obligation to cultivate it, and to check every inclination that may obstruct its growth and exercise, which inferior animals have not.

Besides the resentment we feel in common with other animals of favours and injuries, we have a consciousness which they have not of this resentment being strictly due. And though, from a yet nobler principle, we may find ourselves under an obligation to discharge the last ; yet we cannot, by any possible means, cancel the first obligation. It is worthy of notice, that this consciousness of what is due to a benefactor is often complete, when the instinctive disposition to grati-

tude is weak, and even extinct. It is also worthy of notice, that the frequent exercise of the one hath a tendency to awaken the other. Let it farther be observed, that the reasoning faculty is employed sometimes for and sometimes against both the animal affection and rational perception of gratitude; which shows that instinct, reasoning, and rational perception, are distinct powers of the mind, and act sometimes independently one of another.

Besides the instinctive emotion by which we repel an assault on our persons, or invasion of our property, we know we have a right so to do; and sometimes act from the one principle without the aid of the other. Besides the instinctive inclination to concur with our fellows in maintaining the rights of the society we belong to, which fills our breasts with noble and generous emotions, we have a conviction of our obligation to do so; a clear and indisputable conviction and belief, similar to the conviction and belief we have that a whole
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is greater than its part; without which we could not act in many instances, upon account of the interfering of many other inferior obligations which otherwise would obstruct the action.

Besides that instinctive sense of dignity which is often merely animal, and therefore childish, weak, and silly, we have an idea of real worth, arising from rational perception, which inferior animals have not, and are often obliged to check and correct the one by the other. And besides the natural propensity to behave with submission to superiors, and with authority to inferiors, we have, from a standard within our minds, a perception and judgment of what is due of right to the one and to the other, which inferior animals have not.

With respect to the obligation to worship and obey God, of which the inferior animals are absolutely insensible, it would be unreasonable to expect the same instinctive emotions and inclinations we have to the other offices of life. But we have a clear perception of those obliga-

tions, accompanied with emotions and inclinations very nearly resembling those we call *instinctive*. Though the divine perfections are no objects of sense, and do not operate upon the mind in the same manner as sensible objects do; yet it is impossible for a rational being to contemplate them as they are displayed in the œconomy of nature and grace, without feeling emotions and inclinations, in some degree, to the worship and obedience of God. Nor is it possible for one to habituate himself to such acts, without contracting a habit of devotion, very much resembling our instinctive inclinations. There are pious people who address themselves to the duties of religion with the same alacrity, and, I had almost said, instinctive emotion, with which they perform a kind office to a friend. As, on the other hand, there are numbers, too many, alas! who are capable of a clear perception, with very little or no feeling of those obligations. With regard to this capital branch of duty, our perceptions
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and emotions are as real, and as distinguishable one from another, as on any other subject; and so our idea of common sense as complete with respect to this as to any other duty.

So minute a detail of well-known facts may tire the patience of those who delight in refinement. But patience is due to important inquiries; and none more important than the present. The prince of philosophers would say, That as he who does not understand the nature of horses is not fit to train a horse; and he who does not understand the nature of dogs is not fit to train a dog; so he who does not understand the nature of man is not fit to train a man. In vain do we lay claim to philosophy, if we are unacquainted with the constitution of the human mind; and our knowledge of that subject must be defective and lame, if we have but imperfect, obscure, and vague ideas of that power by which man is distinguished from idiots and the lower animals.

C H A P. IV.

Though the primary truths of religion and morality are not equally attended to, they are equally self-evident with other primary truths.

IT may be alledged, That if the primary truths of religion were as obvious as other primary truths, mankind would have the same belief of them which they have of gravitation, vegetation, and other well-known laws of nature. And no doubt they would, if the belief of mankind were always in exact proportion to the degree of evidence. But it is often otherwise. For on other subjects, as well as on religion, it often exceeds, and sometimes falls below, the degree of evidence. So that the belief of the bulk of mankind is often determined by pre-conceived prejudices, by the unperceived bias of inclination, and by custom and habit, more than by evidence.

Our first notices are from our senses,
and

and we are long accustomed to the contemplation of realities that are objects of sense before we get acquainted with those that are not : and being in the after course of our lives invited by pleasure, and urged by necessity, to cultivate a farther acquaintance with them, they become almost the sole objects of our thought. Other objects, though real and interesting, appear foreign and uncouth. Our ideas of them, though unavoidable, are faint, obscure, imperfect. We sink into the animal life ; and some are little distinguished from mere animals. But still there is something within us that bears testimony to realities which are not objects of sense ; and in proportion to the original strength of that power, and the facility of judging it acquires by exercise, is our belief of all primary truths, and in particular those of religion.

One cannot live any time in the world without observing the operation of gravitation, vegetation, and animal motion. But one may pass a great part of his life without due attention, or indeed any attention,

tention, to that depth of design apparent in the system he inhabits. The effects and operation of the laws of nature offer themselves to our senses, and press upon them: but the contrivance which runs through the whole needs to be pointed out, or requires some degree, however small, of thought and attention. A savage will of necessity, and without direction or assistance, soon get acquainted with some of the laws of nature: but there is no difficulty of conceiving a number of savages, yea, and of persons civilized to a certain degree, who pass their whole lives with little or no acquaintance with religion, because they are not directed to that study by any pressing necessity.

We amuse ourselves with idle speculations about the religion of savages, when it is well known that we have among ourselves multitudes, not only of the vulgar, but of cultivated understanding, who gaze upon the heavens and the earth as savages, or as the lower animals do, without bestowing one serious thought
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on the author of the plan, or discovering any tolerable sense of the relation in which they stand to him, or the obligations arising from that relation. If these people have any knowledge of the primary truths of religion, it must be in a manner by rote, and owing chiefly to public or private teaching.

Barbarous nations have lame and confused notions of religion. True. So have thoughtless and inconsiderate people among ourselves. But we are not therefore to conclude, that the evidence for the truths of religion is faint and obscure. Upon inquiry you may find, in this enlightened age, those who have no distinct knowledge of the perfections of God, or the obligations of virtue: but on inquiry you may find a number equal to them, who have no distinct ideas of vegetation, cohesion of parts, or of motion. But you cannot conclude any thing from hence against the obviousness of these realities, because they may be easily and clearly apprehended by those very persons, on turning their attention
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to the phænomena from whence they result. There are persons of good understanding void of all ideas of electricity, who would perceive it at once upon seeing the operation of the electrical machine ; and it were strange if Mr. Hume himself, after feeling the shock, could possibly doubt the reality of this law or power in nature. Just then as a peasant would come to the knowledge of electricity, or any other law in nature, upon attending to its operation ; so would a savage come to the knowledge of the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, on having these perfections, as they are displayed in his works, presented to his view. The evidence for the one is the same as for the other, and results in the same manner from the phænomena of nature ; but with this difference, that our attention is more frequently and earnestly solicited to the one than to the other.

The obligations of morality are thought more obvious than those of religion ; and perhaps they may be so in some degree : but the difference arises wholly from
from

from their being more attended to, on account of their immediate connection with a present interest; for otherwise it may be doubted whether they would be more easily apprehended, or more quickly believed than the others. The observation of some laws of morality is as indispensable to society, as the observation of the laws of nature is to the common arts of life; and therefore you cannot find human creatures living in society, totally ignorant of the laws of morality. But you may find those in society, as well as those detached from it, who have scarce any notion of many moral obligations that are absolutely obvious. Thieves, pirates, and other declared enemies of society, have often a just and nice sense of moral obligation in some cases, those I mean which concern their success and safety, without any sense at all of other obligations equally strict and equally obvious. There are also in the bosom of society combinations of a like kind, but of more creditable appearance, the members of which talk high, and with great sincerity,

sincerity, of justice, honour, and good faith, and exclaim with great bitterness against the violation of these obligations, where their own and their associates interest is concerned ; and shew at the same time an amazing insensibility to other obligations the most obvious and sacred.

They who form their judgment of mankind by abstract ideas of rationality, will hardly give credit to these inconsistencies ; but people who know the world, will not be much surpris'd to find great probity in some instances, connected with as great villany in others ; or will at least allow, that men may have a clear perception of some obligations, with a total blindness to others that are not less obvious. So little are mankind attentive to the reason of things, and so much influenced by custom, habit, and low appetites, in their sentiments as well as actions, that it may be doubted whether, without public or private teaching, or both, they could attain, or if they did, whether they could preserve, a tolerably just sense of religion, or of any moral obligation

ligation to which they were not impelled by interest, reputation, present conveniency, or by some of those instinctive emotions they have in common with lower animals.

Every one acknowledges the power of habit in determining the motions of our limbs. Most people acknowledge also its power over our affections and inclinations. But they who have the truest knowledge of themselves, will frankly own, that they believe some things merely because they have been accustomed to think them true; and have difficulty of trusting to the evidence of other truths, which have not been much the object of their attention. This acknowledgment, which none but people of discernment will make, is however the best account can be given of the way of thinking of the bulk of mankind, not only on religious, but on all other subjects.

People of rank make loud outcries against the vulgar, on account of the inflexibility and perverseness with which
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they oppose certain plain measures of promoting their own interest, as well as that of their country. But there is no mystery in the matter. These unhappy people are not much accustomed to think and judge. Their rational powers are originally as good as those of their superiors, but have not been so much exercised. You may make them see the truth, and acknowledge it; but they cannot all at once adopt it in their judgment. They are habituated to another way of judging and acting, to which they have contracted a strong attachment; and which therefore they cannot give up for an opposite plan, however rational, just, or even beneficial. The same defect of understanding may be found in their superiors, though not in the same degree. Errors in abundance, and some gross enough, in the police of their country, in the œconomy of their families, and the methods they take of raising themselves and their families to opulence and dignity, may be pointed out, which they do not perceive, or on which they have not

bestowed a due attention. You may shew them, and invincibly demonstrate, how, by a change of measures not at all impracticable, perhaps no wise difficult, they might render themselves far more useful than they are to their families, their friends, and their country; but with little effect. They will not reject your proposition with the rude obstinacy of the vulgar, but neither will they give it the entertainment which might be expected from those of extensive views and liberal education. Out of curiosity, perhaps, or civility, they will give you the hearing, and seem to assent; but if they have taken their ply, you will have great difficulty in putting them on a new way of acting, or even in giving them a different way of thinking from what they have always entertained.

In reality mankind of all ranks are much governed by habit in their sentiments as well as actions; so that truths the plainest, the most interesting and important, if foreign to their way of think-

ing, make but a slender impression; and the great truths of religion being unhappily foreign to the thoughts of the bulk of mankind, are therefore of little force in convincing their judgment, or determining their conduct.

The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light; not because the maxims on which they proceed are more evident or certain, but because they are more attended to than those of religion. Present interest, present pleasure, and pomp, put them early on observing the maxims of the world: and the practice of other people, with their own habitual way of thinking, and acting, give the utmost possible confirmation to the regard they entertain for these maxims, and the inclination they have to proceed upon them. But where these causes do not concur, or where there is any considerable defect in any one of them, the children of this world are found as foolish, and sometimes more so, than the children of light.

To conclude, mankind are weak, low,
filly

filly creatures, not so much by their original frame, as through sloth and habitual indulgence. They confine their attention to a present gratification, or the appearance of present interest; and that they will pursue at all hazards, and often under great uncertainty of success; whilst an interest far more valuable, and more easily and more certainly obtained, being removed at a small distance, is quite overlooked, or regarded with indifference. Hence have sprung all those follies and vices of the human kind, which in all ages have subjected them to the censure of the wise, and the ridicule of the witty.

We have indeed no occasion to be surprised at the little regard paid by the bulk of mankind to obligations of the religious or moral kind, which are not recommended by views of present convenience. We ought rather to wonder, that they retain such belief of those truths, with such regard to these interests as commonly prevail. Nor will it be possible to resolve this into any other cause

than the irresistible evidence with which these interesting and important truths present themselves, on the slightest attention.

The learned, it is true, have gone upon the supposition of a defect of evidence, which they have laboured to supply by much reasoning. But from their ill success we may see their mistake, and the obligation which lies on all the friends of religion, to give up these false measures, and employ their skill and address in turning the attention of mankind to truths that are obvious and indubitable.

C H A P. V.

Our knowledge and belief of all primary truths are derived, not from sensation, or reflection upon sensation, but from that power of perceiving and judging peculiar to rational beings, called common sense.

SO apt are people to go wrong through too much or too little thinking, that notwithstanding all that is said above,

bove, it will be necessary to prevent misapprehensions of this important subject, arising from the prejudices of the vulgar, and the refinements of the learned.

Ask the vulgar how they come by the knowledge of those realities that are the objects of rational perception, and they will be apt to ascribe it chiefly, if not solely, to their external senses. They seem to think that they not only feel the qualities of matter, but matter itself; and that not only do they get acquainted with the laws of nature, by means of their external organs, but that these laws are actually the objects of sense. They imagine they see motion, as well as bodies that are moved; that by seeing the figure of a man, they see the man; and, finally, that they not only perceive the being and perfections of God by his works, but that the Godhead also may become the object of their senses. Getting all at once the clear and certain knowledge of causes from their effects, the vulgar conjoin and confound them in their thought and imagination. Even

ancient philosophers were so deeply tainted with this error, that they connected and confounded the soul of the universe with the universe itself, and so represented God as a living animal, or rather a multiplicity of animals subjected to the senses of men; which proved no small support of Pagan idolatry. But a little attention may suffice to correct such absurdities. The perceptions we call *rational* do indeed result from our animal perceptions, (for the one could not be without the other); but to imagine we see motion, gravitation, cohesion of parts, or the principle of animal and rational life, is too gross an absurdity to be admitted by a philosopher. From the effect and operation we know with certainty, or, if you will, by our internal faculty, we see the powers of nature; but to our external senses they are absolutely imperceptible. The invisible things of God are clearly seen. But how?—being understood, saith the scripture, by the things that he hath made. The essence of the Deity is beyond the reach of our
external

external organs, as is the essence of every other being : but by that power whereby rational beings are distinguished from irrational, we are fully assured of these and many such realities, which are not the objects of sense.

As the vulgar, through the grossness of their conceptions, have lame and confused ideas of primary truths, so the learned have puzzled themselves and others about them by the art of reasoning, to which they have been so long and so violently attached. Ask the learned how we come to the knowledge of realities which are not the objects of sense, and all with one voice declare—by reason. If by *reason* they mean that faculty in man whereby he is distinguished from a brute or an idiot, they say well : but if by *reason* they mean, as they commonly do, the skill of investigating unknown truths by truths more known, which in the schools is termed *logic*, and in common conversation is called *reasoning*, they are much mistaken. For reasoning can have no place here. There are not in

nature truths better known, or more evident, than those in question : nor is it possible to deduce them from other truths, with the same evidence with which we know, and must know them, if we are not idiots, by a simple act of perception and judgment.

Reasoning is proper, of great use, as well as of indispensable necessity, when kept within its own province ; but beyond that, becomes frivolous, impertinent, and fitter to perplex and abuse the understanding, than to assist it in the discovery of truth. To what purpose should we set about the proof of the being of matter and motion, of gravitation, or any other primary truth ? Can we by the rules of reasoning add any thing to the conviction we have of these realities ? or can we at all reason on the subject ? Where shall we find a medium, or how form the syllogism ? We may assume the truth in question, as is often done, for a principle of reasoning, and so form a sophism ; or we may have recourse by analogy to other truths not more evident, and

and so produce a trifling demonstration. But we shall never offer any thing that deserves the name of argument in proof of primary truths ; for as they do not require, so they cannot admit of any proof.

It is common to say, that we infer the laws of nature from the phænomena. But that way of speaking is not philosophical, nor strictly true. In every just inference, there is a reference to some well-known truth ; by the help of which the inference is made, and on the truth of which its justness depends. But there is no truth in nature by which we can infer those realities which are not the objects of sense, from those that are. From the appearance of smoke we infer fire. Why ? —because we know the connection between the one and the other, and are positive that the one does not exist without the other. From certain qualities appearing in ore we infer silver, gold, or other metals ; because we are previously acquainted with those metals. From certain words, looks, gestures, we infer joy, grief, anger ; because we know these
passions,

passions, and the symptoms by which they express themselves. From an uniform course of good, bad, wise, or foolish actions, we always infer a fixed disposition in the agent ; because of the connection we believe to subsist between disposition and action. Thus some general truth is always understood, on the knowledge of which the inference depends, and without which it could not regularly proceed. If that general truth is doubtful, the inference becomes so of course ; and if it is denied, there can be no inference till its truth is established. If, for instance, the qualities ascribed to ore do not belong to silver, you cannot infer silver ; or if the looks and gestures specified are not certain indications of anger or fear, you cannot infer these passions ; and so of all the rest. By supplying the proposition understood, every just inference can be turned into an enthymeme, or, by adding a third proposition, may become a formal syllogism. But it is impossible to give the form of syllogism, enthymeme, inference, or any other species of
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of reasoning, to our manner of discovering primary truths, because we proceed without the help of a middle term.

One discovers in all bodies a tendency towards the centre; and thence comes to the knowledge of a law in nature called *gravitation*. By repeated trials one finds that fire consumes combustibles; and from thence concludes that it actually hath a power to do so. Shall this be called an inference in the proper sense of the word; or is it reducible to any form of reasoning? By what truth in nature is the justness of the inference supported? By experience, you will say. Experience, of what? of the thing itself? You find that bodies incline to the centre, and therefore conclude that they have an inclination to do so; that corn, grass, and other vegetables, do actually vegetate, and from thence conclude a principle of vegetation. Is not such reasoning childish in the lowest degree; and does it not approach very nearly to saying, that you have discovered a thing because you have discovered it? And would it not do just

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as well to say, that on due attention to the phænomena, you get acquainted with the laws of nature by a simple act of perception and judgment?

If it is asked, whether primary truths are discovered by intuition? the answer will be in the negative; because intuition hath, with propriety enough, been confined to our perception of obvious relations and qualities of being. But we affirm at the same time, that our knowledge of primary truths is equally certain and indubitable as that by intuition. The man who from the looks, the gesture, and speech of his adversary, sees rage and resentment, which are not, strictly speaking, objects of intuition, hath the same certain information of these passions as he hath of any other reality, which he perceives intuitively by his internal or external sense.

On giving up reasoning, consciousness, and intuition, the only sources of knowledge besides sensation, authorised by philosophy, we shall no doubt be asked, how we come by this certain knowledge
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of primary truths? To which we answer, as we have in effect done already, by that perception and judgment of obvious truth peculiar to the rational mind, called *common sense*.

We do not expect that any one will have the boldness to call in question our having ideas of gravitation, self-determination, and other such primary truths; and we do not think it necessary to account for the origin of these ideas otherwise than by a simple appeal to common sense. If a man is asked, why he pronounces dogmatically that ink is black, and milk is white? he will tell you, that he does so, because he hath eyes in his head, or is possessed of that organ by which all animals perceive such objects. If a man is asked, how, upon attending to certain phænomena, he comes to be so positive about certain laws of nature which are not objects of sense? he will in like manner tell you, that he is a rational being, and possessed of that power of perception and judgment called *common sense*, by which beings of that rank are distinguished

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distinguished from idiots and lower animals.

Many truths in nature, and among these the great truths of religion, have too much evidence in themselves to admit of any foreign proof. Their evidence is at least equal to, if not greater than what can be found in any other truths with which they are connected or can be compared. Every attempt therefore to establish their belief by argument, takes from their native evidence, or weakens the assent they would obtain on being fairly presented to the mind. With regard to truths of this order, the business is not to reason, but to judge. If one is endued with the faculty of judging common to the rational kind, he will pronounce truly on a fair representation of the object; and if he is not, there is no remedy. The rational mind hath a standard within itself, to which it recurs, and by which it pronounces without hesitation on truths that are obvious. If that standard is wanting, as in the case of idiots, there is no judging. If it is
perverted,

perversed, as in the case of those who labour under a total or partial disorder, the judgment will be false. But if the standard exists in any tolerable degree of rectitude, no more is needful than to present the object. Relations the most apparent to the internal or external sight, cannot be perceived more easily, or with more certainty, than a sound understanding perceives the primary truths, those of religion in particular, on due attention to the phænomena.

B O O K V.

The judgment of common sense
will be decisive with men of
sound understanding.

C H A P. I.

*It is easy to distinguish truths which have,
from those which have not, the authority
of common sense.*

SO little care hath been taken to point
out the distinction between primary
and secondary truths, with the different degrees of evidence belonging to each; or, to speak plainly, the learned, by subjecting all truths indiscriminately to disputation, have done so much to destroy this distinction, that we are not to wonder if some of their disciples should want to be informed when we have, and when we have not, the authority of common

mon sense: in which we hope to give them satisfaction, if they will with due attention look into the various operations of the human mind in its inquiries after truth, with its various modes of belief.

There are two great evils in life which mightily disgrace the human understanding, and have created much disturbance to the learned; bigotry, and scepticism; owing both to the same cause, ignorance of, or inattention to, the distinction between primary and secondary truths, and the different degrees of evidence belonging to each. The bigot embraces the distinguishing tenets of his sect with a faith as firm, and maintains them with a zeal as ardent, if not more so, than he hath for the fundamental doctrines of religion. The sceptic, on the other hand, is as shy of primary truths, and as scrupulous in admitting them, as he ought to be in admitting those opinions that are founded upon trains of logical deduction or critical skill. The sceptic pities the credulity of the bigot, and the bigot is shocked at the impudence of the sceptic.

tic. Both are well satisfied with themselves ; and when endued with popular talents, are in high estimation with the ill-judging multitude ; but to men of good sense appear equally foolish, though in opposite extremes. But reasoning, alas ! the remedy hitherto employed, is the worst that could be thought of, and fitter to inflame than correct the disorder. The bigot, through the force of that preternatural faith in which he glories, makes no more account of the strongest arguments, than Samson did of the cords with which the Philistines bound him. The sceptic, whether he is foiled or victorious, finds his account in reasoning ; because he is thereby confirmed in his opinion, that the truth in question is at least disputable.

In order to a perfect cure of this evil, it is necessary to go to its source. The bigot ought to be told, that his opinion may be true, but is not a truth of the first order ; that it derives its evidence from other truths to which it is related, and on which it depends ; and is just so
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far, and no farther, to be relied on, than we can rely upon the fidelity and exactness of tracing these relations and dependencies, and making proper and just deductions from them. The sceptic ought to know, that his own objections, and the arguments of his adversary, may be just what he believes them to be : but that is nothing to the purpose ; because the proposition in question derives no evidence from its connection with or dependence on other truths, and cannot be established or confuted by reasoning ; but must either be admitted or rejected upon its own evidence ; and that it concerns him, as a man of sense and probity, to do the one or the other, without tergiversation or shuffling.

A sceptic will, no doubt, insist upon his right of holding his mind in suspense, without admitting any proposition as obviously true, or rejecting it as palpably false, until he is compelled by arguments to do so. But as there are innumerable truths, which the most determined dogmatist must allow to be liable to dispute ;

so there are a great many, Mr. Locke says almost an infinite number of propositions, which the most cautious sceptic must admit as self-evident, or reject as palpably false, upon his understanding the terms. In short, it will be no difficult task to point out those truths that are the objects of common sense, and to distinguish them from others that are not.

That the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, is as true as that all the parts are equal to the whole : but yet they are not truths of the same rank. The last mentioned is a primary truth, obvious to every understanding ; and therefore an object of common sense. The other truth is secondary, known only to the learned ; and therefore a proper subject of inquiry. That a certain parcel of lands belong of right to the gentleman who possesses them, and not to the other who claims them, may be as true as this proposition, Every man ought to have his own : But however confidently men may talk or think of their rights, there is a mighty difference
between

between the one and the other proposition. The evidence of the one depends upon the knowledge of several transactions, a right understanding of the meaning of words, a true judgment of the laws of the land, in which there is at least the possibility of mistake : The evidence of the other arises from a few simple ideas, about which one cannot be mistaken. That God is to be worshipped, must be assented to by every one possessed of the ideas conveyed by the words *God* and *worship* : But how often he is to be worshipped, and in what manner, whether according to the prescription of this or the other body of learned divines and serious Christians, is a question of another kind. That magistrates ought to be obeyed, That the workman is worthy of his wages, That every one ought to take care of his own and his family's interest, and, That men ought to do kind and friendly offices each to other,—these, and the like propositions, appear obviously true, as the propositions opposite to them appear obviously false, to every man

of common sense. But how far in certain cases a magistrate ought to be obeyed, whether a certain workman is intitled to the wages he claims, whether a man is bound to take this or the other measure for his own or his family's interest, or do this or the other kind office to his neighbour, may be questions of delicate decision, that require nice discussion, and may bear much reasoning on both sides.

Here then are truths of different ranks, supported by evidence extremely different, and distinguishable each from other, without any uncommon degree of discernment. So that no man can be at a loss to know propositions that are the objects of common sense from those that are not, and to determine with himself where he hath and hath not a right to suspend his judgment. If the evidence of the proposition under consideration flows from its relation to or connection with some other truth, he has no doubt a right to suspend his judgment till he hath inquired into that connection and relation: and if on doing so he finds, that
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the evidence of the other truth flows from its relation to and connection with a third truth, he has a right still to suspend his judgment till he has inquired into that relation and connection; and so on through every necessary step of inquiry, till he arrives at a primary truth, or at one on which he can rely with absolute certainty. Nor, if he is wise, will he yet pronounce, until he has carefully examined the steps he has taken, and secured himself as much as possible against error. On the other hand, if the evidence of the proposition submitted to his judgment doth not arise from any relation to or connection with other truths, but the proposition hath in itself manifest marks of truth or falsehood, he hath no right to hesitate; for he has no occasion to inquire, but is strictly bound to admit or reject the proposition, according to the marks it hath of truth or falsehood. To determine, then, our obligation to believe or hesitate, we have only to inquire into the rank of the truth alledged; unless we imagine that there may be truths neither
primary

primary nor secondary, and so neither objects of common sense, nor subjects of rational inquiry.

Sceptics are known to be as little proof against a panic as other people; and therefore may be shy of pronouncing on primary truths, lest they should appear to be visionary: but there is a mighty difference between the belief of a visionary, and that we have of primary truths. The one may be said to be diametrically opposite to the other; for to appeal to common sense is the last thing a visionary will think of in support of his opinion. The facts they assert, or the events they foretell, are believed by them as firmly as we believe the primary truths; but with this difference, that if they do not pretend to some dream, or other method of preternatural information, they frankly own, that they cannot account for their belief. They say they have a clear and intuitive view of the truth; that it is borne in upon their minds; and they have an irresistible conviction of it: but they are far from calling that conviction rational,

rational, or ascribing it to common sense. A sound believer, on the other hand, pretends to no inspiration but what is common to the rational kind, nor to any communication of truth that is not free and open to all men; but accounts to himself and others for what he believes, by appealing to that perception and judgment of things by which we are distinguished from idiots and the lower animals.

A small degree of attention and discernment will enable any one to distinguish the four above mentioned characters by their following characteristics. The Bigot, in contempt of reasoning, claims the whole authority of reason itself to positions that are often false, and always doubtful. The Sceptic, distrusting the authority of reason, places all his confidence in the art of reasoning, in passing judgment even on primary truths. The Visionary, putting no confidence in reason or reasoning, pronounces dogmatically on grounds inconceivable to others, and mysterious to himself. The
judicious

judicious Believer proportions his faith to the evidence of truth; in those truths that are secondary, to the nearness and clearness of the relation they bear to primary truths; and in the primary, to the degree of evidence in themselves, discoverable by intuition, or immediate and direct perception.

Should one, after all, complain, that, in the above-mentioned truths, and others allowed to be primary, he cannot perceive any criterion by which to determine his judgment; we might admit the fact; but would take notice at the same time, that its singularity was such as not to invalidate our doctrine: nor could we prescribe any other remedy besides his giving due exercise to that power of the human mind which we have shown to be the characteristic of rationality. The powers of the body, we know, are lost through disuse, or want of due exercise; and even in healthful and vigorous constitutions, one particular faculty, through long neglect, may not be felt at all, and yet is often capable of being revived and recovered,

recovered, in some degree, by proper management ; and why may it not be so with the powers of the mind ?

Would a sensible, well-meaning sceptic give up reasoning altogether, and accustom himself to compare the primary truths with their opposite falsities ; the being and providence of God, for instance, with the supposed government of chance or blind necessity ; the obligation to worship God, with a supposed licence of treating with neglect the highest possible perfection ; the obligation of doing justice to men, with the supposed licence of theft, robbery, murder, fraud, and oppression ; the obligation to do acts of friendship and charity, with a deliberate and determined selfishness ; — if a sceptic of common sense, and common honesty, would turn his attention to the creed of Theists, (and he may, if he will, take the genuine plan of Christianity along with it *), in comparison with the system of

sceptics

* As the Christian revelation revives our natural notions of religion, and superadds the discovery of two important

sceptics and infidels, and view and review them, not with all the gaiety recommended by Lord Shaftesbury, nor the dismal gloom prescribed by John Bunyan, but with the care and candor becoming a man of sense and probity, we will promise that his judgment shall not be long in an equal poise about primary truths. We do not pretend to determine the degree of certainty at which he will arrive, for that will be proportioned to the degrees of rationality of which he is possessed; but he may promise himself satisfaction suited to the exercise he gives his good sense and probity on this important subject. This prescription is no less proper for the unthinking part of mankind than for professed sceptics. Many take

portant truths which mankind were anxious to know, and could not otherwise be ascertained of; an œconomy of grace, to wit, in this life, and an exact retribution in the next; one cannot conceive what prejudice a man of sense can have to this plan of doctrine. And as it was at first received by persons no wise prejudiced in its favour, upon an attestation in which they could not be deceived, one must reckon all scepticism concerning it as mere affectation,

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the primary truths for granted, without attending to their evidence, who, if they took the trouble of comparing them with the opposite absurdities, would believe them more cordially, and feel their influence upon their temper and manners more sensibly, than they do.

It may be fit to take notice, that a rational believer may, through the prejudice of education, lean a little too much to those props wherewith the learned have laboured to shore up his faith. But if he looks within himself, he will find that his faith rests upon a foundation more firm and immoveable than any that can be raised by argument. He may pay all the regard that is due to collateral proof from analogy, from probability, and even from probable conjecture: but a little reflection will show him, that he ought, and that he really does lay the stress of his faith, upon an authority that cannot be destroyed but with the extinction of rationality. He will not despise the well-meant labours of those who have endeavoured to demon-

strate the primary truths, by reducing their opposites to absurdity ; but knows, that, without their help, he can, by a single thought, reduce these chimera's to the grossest of all absurdities, namely, to nonsense.

C H A P. II.

By hesitating about truths which have the authority of common sense, one falls under the censure of folly or madness.

SO much have learned men in all ages been attached to the art of reasoning, so much devoted to its cultivation, and so absolutely have they relied upon its exercise, to the neglect and disparagement of the other powers, that scarce can you find one of their disciples who knows any other distinction between a wise man and a fool, a rational being and an idiot, but the skill of reasoning. The perception of the difference between obvious truth and palpable absurdity they have long

long since confined to a few axioms, which, as Mr. Locke says, are not the principles of science, or of any great service in the discovery of truth. Beyond that, if you extend the exercise of this power, they revolt. If, as we have done, you ascribe to it our knowledge of all primary truths, and make it our surest guide in the most momentous concerns of life, they are full of doubts and scruples, and mightily embarrassed; not considering, that this direct perception, or intuitive view of truth, is no other than what every just reasoner hath, and must have, in every step of that proof or demonstration they so much affect.

We cannot proceed in a proof or process of reasoning, without having at every step a direct perception or intuitive view of truth. The justness of our reasoning depends wholly upon the accuracy of these perceptions; and the certainty of our conclusion flows from the exactness with which we have pronounced upon the premises. And if the mind is capable of viewing truth in this manner upon

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these occasions, why may it not pronounce with equal, and with much greater certainty, upon obvious truths, by a simple act of perception and judgment?

We do not judge of primary truths by any other faculty than what you see we must employ in solving problems, and in the demonstration of theorems. We discover three angles of a triangle to be equal to two right ones, by the same power of reason which discovers the whole to be greater than a part: And by the self-same power does an accomptant reach the truth in calculations, the most tedious and complex, by which he judges that two and three make five. The power is the same; but the manner of exercising it is very different.

In the exercise of the discursive faculty, we must attend to the connection and combination of a multitude of truths, on which we found our judgment: In a simple act of perception and judgment, we have that object only to attend to which presents the truth to obvious observation. In judging by the one, we

have great dependence on our care and skill in applying the rules of reasoning : In pronouncing by the other, (provided the object be fairly presented), our sole dependence is on the soundness of our understanding. There must, therefore, be great danger of mistake in the one, and scarce any danger at all in the other.

In both judgments we are indeed supported by the authority of reason : but that authority is much fuller in favour of the one than of the other. In those judgments we arrive at by the help of reasoning, we have the authority of reason, with reserves and limitations arising from the danger of mistakes in reasoning : but in the other we have the authority of reason without reserve or limitation. If, therefore, we arrive at any certainty by the exercise of our discursive faculty, we may have still greater certainty by the due exercise of perception and judgment on their proper objects : and if, as rational beings, we find ourselves obliged to assent to truths that are discovered by reasoning, we must find the obligation

still stronger to assent to truths that have the full authority of reason. And if it is a reproach upon our understanding not to perceive secondary truths, which are investigated by the one, it must be yet more reproachful not to be sensible of the authority that is stamped on the other. He who doubts, or does not fully acquiesce in truths made out by reasoning, may be ignorant, unlearned, or unskilful, in the art of reasoning: but he who hesitates about truths that have the full authority and attestation of reason, is a fool.

Whether the evidence which attends the primary truths of physics, theology, and ethics, is the same with the evidence which belongs to mathematical axioms, is a question of curiosity rather than of use. For if the evidence of any primary truth is such as cannot be resisted, without contravening, not the rules of reasoning, but the authority of reason itself, or common sense, these truths have all the evidence that is to be wished for, or can well be conceived.

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It is true, that one cannot, if he would, form a conception of any thing in contradiction to mathematical axioms; he cannot, for instance, conceive, that two and three make four and not five: but it is very possible to form conceptions in contradiction to the primary truths of physics; the non-existence, for instance, of some one or other of the laws of nature, and even of all the laws, and also of the author of these laws. But, madness apart, how far it is possible to conceive this as a reality, is still the question.

The scripture pronounces wo on those who put darkness for light, and light for darkness, bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. Our Saviour declared the Jews incapable of perceiving the strongest evidence possible; that they had eyes and saw not, ears and heard not, hearts and did not understand. There are in common life, as well as in religion, too many instances of a strange blindness to obvious truths, and a seeming acquiescence in palpable absurdity. From the

steady composure with which some abandoned men withstand the clearest conviction, and acquiesce, to appearance at least, in gross falsehood, there is room to suspect, that, from a particular structure of head or heart, or both, some rational beings may not only conceive, but entertain themselves with the conception of falsities, in contradiction to all the primary truths of physics, theology, and ethics; and yet one would think they must have at the bottom of their minds a witness for the truth; and that, the case of madness excepted, their belief cannot be thorough and sincere.

It seems impossible, as hath been often observed, that a man in his senses should attend to the uniform operation of elastic bodies, and doubt of a fixed law or power in nature called *elasticity*; or to the uniform behaviour of vicious or virtuous men, and doubt of a fixed disposition to vice or virtue; or to the uniform course of nature, and doubt the being and perfections of its author. And if any such ways of thinking do take place, and are
real,

real, we must conclude the persons who think so to be fools and madmen ;—mad, as Lord Bolingbroke speaks, *quoad hoc* : for an incapacity to admit primary truths, or a capacity of believing the opposite falsity, will be found the most precise characteristic distinction that can be fixed between a wise man and a fool.

Fools and madmen are a species of irrationals different from brutes and idiots. A fool has ideas and affections of which a brute or an idiot is incapable. Madmen also, through the fury of their passions, and violence of an inflamed imagination, have many perceptions which fools have not. But fools, madmen, and idiots, agree in a certain incapacity of acquiescing in those truths which are the objects of rational perception.

Madmen and fools have generally the free exercise of their external organs ; and therefore have the same perceptions with wise men of those realities which are the immediate objects of sense : but with regard to those that are not, they not only act, but think and judge, absurdly ; are

capable of believing the most arrant nonsense, and of disbelieving and doubting of the most obvious and manifest truths. They seem sometimes to overlook or forget, and utterly lose sight of the well-known laws of nature; and have at all times a confused, imperfect, and faint idea of the laws of religious, moral, and civil life. They will plant and build, and form plans of action, with seeming sagacity and skill; but in contradiction to the fundamental laws of physics, the fundamental laws of policy, and the obvious obligations of religion and virtue. They often disclose the prettiest, the wittiest, and sometimes the most sublime sentiments; but with regard to the maxims of wise conduct, respecting God, their neighbour, or themselves, they discover a strange incapacity.

It is remarked of madmen, that, during the time of their disorder, they are cruel, cowardly, revengeful, and impious, in the highest degree, and destitute, to appearance, of all sentiments of religion and virtue. They will, upon occa-
sion,

sion, talk fluently of these things; but seem incapable of the same conviction of their reality which is common to rational beings.

It is further worthy of notice, that they who hold the first rank for understanding, and are allowed by all to be great men, are firm believers: whereas many genius's of inferior rank, and almost all the half-witty and half-learned, have a tendency to infidelity and scepticism. It is indeed alledged, that the affectation of singularity, and a certain vanity of appearing above the vulgar, and of making men stare at the boldness of their opinions, puts them on saying many things which they do not believe: but a discerning eye will see a weakness of judgment which makes them fluctuate in the belief of primary truths. Many of them have too much acuteness of understanding and sensibility of heart, not to see, and even feel, the truth at times. But then they are subject to starts of thought, and fallies of imagination, which hurry them away: and being al-

so endued, as they sometimes are, with singular quickness of thought, and fluency of expression, they take a strange delight in maintaining opinions in direct contradiction to common sense.

Folly and madness admit of various degrees, and put on a great variety of forms, which puzzle and impose on superficial thinkers. But a true judge will perceive, in all those degrees, and under all that variety of forms, a want of common sense, or a certain incapacity of admitting and adhering steadily to those truths that are the objects of rational perception.

Fools and madmen have in reality no steady principles of conduct, besides those they derive from their senses, their imagination, or animal affections. Folly and madness, therefore, consists, not in any defect or disorder of the external organs, nor in any defect in the reasoning powers, but in an incapacity, to a certain degree, of admitting and resting in truths which, being no objects of sense, are not perceived by mere animals, but are easily

ly admitted and acquiesced in by rational beings. Every one, therefore, is chargeable with folly or madness to the degree in which this incapacity appears, and every one's folly or madness may be cured or corrected in proportion as he can be restored to a capacity of rational perception.

To put this matter, if possible, in a yet more decisive point of view, let us suppose, that by a sudden disorder or disease a man of understanding is reduced to the state of an idiot, without having his animal perceptions in the least impaired; will he not from that moment be incapable of all religious or moral sentiments? Let us again suppose the same man restored to the exercise of his reason, and he becomes immediately susceptible of all the obvious obligations of religion and morality. If his recovery is gradual and slow, his conception of the primary truths will be so in proportion: but if his recovery is quick, he will as quickly perceive, or be capable of perceiving them. Does not every one see from hence, that our knowledge

ledge and belief of the primary truths are derived from that power of the human mind by which we are distinguished from idiots and the lower animals; and that in proportion to the vigor and extent of this power will be our belief of these truths? If one man perceives them more clearly, or adheres to them more steadily than another, it is because he is blessed with a larger portion of these powers, or hath given them greater extent and vigor by proper exercise. The latter may be more knowing in other respects, more learned, more eloquent, more every thing: but the former enjoys a superiority in common sense.

We have found, then, a source of ideas that has been too long overlooked, and in it have found the much-contested source of moral obligation. Theology and ethics may now be considered as a real science, founded on principles of indubitable certainty; principles which, if they are not as much regarded, are however intitled to an equal regard with the axioms of the schools,—the principles of common sense.

B O O K

B O O K VI.

All objections to the authority of
common sense are groundless.

C H A P. I.

*Variety of opinions is not incompatible with
common sense.*

SHOULD the reader be fully satisfied concerning the difference between first and secondary truths; should he also be convinced of the absurdity of subjecting primary truths to disputation; and should he be willing to bring them to the test of common sense: yet perhaps he may still demur, and ask, where that test is to be found, and how it may be known? — A very strange question to come from the mouth of a man of sense; and yet from such it often comes. We might answer this question in the language of Moses to the people of Israel:
“ It

“ It is not hidden from thee, neither is it
 “ far off. It is not in heaven, that thou
 “ shouldst say, Who shall go up for us to
 “ heaven, and bring it unto us, that we
 “ may hear it and do it? Neither is it
 “ beyond the sea, that thou shouldst say,
 “ Who shall go over the sea for us, and
 “ bring it unto us, that we may hear it
 “ and do it? But the word is very nigh
 “ unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy
 “ heart, that thou mayst do it.” —
 Nevertheless, the deep-rooted prejudices
 of the times make it necessary to enter in-
 to this subject.

Lord Shaftesbury gives the objection at
 full length in the following manner.
 “ We had been a long while entertained,
 “ you know, upon the subject of mora-
 “ lity and religion : And amidst the dif-
 “ ferent opinions started and maintained
 “ by several of the parties, with great
 “ life and ingenuity, one or other would
 “ every now and then take the liberty to
 “ appeal to *common sense*. Every one al-
 “ lowed the appeal, and was willing to
 “ stand the trial. No one but was assu-
 “ red

“ red common sense would justify him.
 “ But when issue was joined, and the
 “ cause examined at the bar, there could
 “ be no judgment given. The parties,
 “ however, were not less forward in re-
 “ newing their appeal on the very next
 “ occasion which presented. No one
 “ would offer to call the authority of the
 “ court in question, till a gentleman,
 “ whose good understanding was never
 “ yet brought in doubt, desired the com-
 “ pany very gravely, that they would tell
 “ him what common sense was.

“ If by the word *sense* we were to un-
 “ derstand opinion and judgment, and
 “ by the word *common* the generality or
 “ any considerable part of mankind, it
 “ would be hard, he said, to discover
 “ where the subject of common sense
 “ could lie. For that which was accor-
 “ ding to the sense of one part of man-
 “ kind was against the sense of another.
 “ And if the majority were to determine
 “ common sense, it would change as oft-
 “ en as men changed. That which was
 “ according to common sense to-day,
 “ would

“ would be the contrary to-morrow, or
 “ soon after.

“ But notwithstanding the different
 “ judgments of mankind in most sub-
 “ jects, there were some, however, in
 “ which 'twas supposed they all agreed,
 “ and had the same thoughts in com-
 “ mon.—The question was still asked,
 “ Where? For whatever was of any mo-
 “ ment, 'twas supposed, might be redu-
 “ ced under the head of religion, policy,
 “ or morals.

“ Of the differences in religion there
 “ was no occasion to speak, the case was
 “ so fully known to all, and so feelingly
 “ understood by Christians in particular
 “ among themselves. They had made
 “ found experiment upon one another,
 “ each party in their turn. No endea-
 “ vours had been wanting on the side of
 “ any particular sect. Whichever chan-
 “ ced to have the power, failed not of
 “ putting all means in execution to make
 “ their private sense the public one. But
 “ all in vain. Common sense was as hard
 “ still to determine as catholic or ortho-
 “ dox.

“dox. What with one was inconceivable mystery, to another was of easy comprehension. What to one was absurdity, to another was demonstration.

“As for policy ; what sense, or whose could be called common, was equally a question. If plain British or Dutch sense were right, Turkish and French sense must certainly be very wrong. And as mere nonsense as passive obedience seemed, we found it to be the common sense of a great party amongst ourselves, a greater party in Europe, and perhaps the greatest part of all the world besides.

“As for morals, the difference, if possible, was still wider. For without considering the opinions and customs of the many barbarous and illiterate nations, we saw that even the few who had attained to riper letters, and to philosophy, could never as yet agree on one and the same system, or acknowledge the same moral principles. And some even of our most admired modern philosophers had fairly told us, that

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“virtue

“virtue and vice had, after all, no other
 “law or measure than mere fashion and
 “vogue.”

Are we to wonder that this hero of infidelity should rail so intemperately at the clergy, and make such rude attacks upon the faith of Christians, when we find him indulge his sportive imagination in so licentious a manner in the ridicule of common sense? But unhappily for the world this Noble writer is not singular in his way of thinking. There are those, not indeed of the unlearned, but among the learned, who distrust the authority of common sense, and seem to doubt its existence: and some there are who positively affirm, that there neither is nor can be any such thing. In truth, the unlearned are the only people who retain a clear idea of common sense, and appeal to it as an oracle, and the learned alone are sceptical. You shall not find a man of sense among the unlearned who hesitates, and scarce will you find one among the learned who does not. Such are the blessed effects of modern learning!

What is thought right in one age and country, say they, is deemed wrong in another. Base and honourable, merit and demerit, wise and foolish, have different acceptations, and have been differently understood, in different periods of time, and under different circumstances: So that nothing is fixed, nothing can be determined; there is no certain standard of truth; no common sense.

Here you see the last resource of scepticism, its last intrenchment, one may say; and from it you may judge of the strength of the cause.

But, oh! Philosophy, thou guide of life, whither hast thou fled, and left a bewildered people to be thus misled by bold conjectures, superficial inquiries, and partial views of nature! Might not one with equal reason say, that because the countenance and air of the English differ much from that of the French, and still more from the inhabitants of North America, and those under the line; and because difference of climate and circumstances give great variety of appearances

to human beings, there is therefore no such thing as the human form, no features, no lines of distinction, no peculiar expression of thought and sentiment by which a painter could represent the face of a man in contradistinction to that of a horse or a bullock.

Have these bold and confident objectors satisfied themselves, that variety and uniformity are incompatible? or have they never heard that they go hand in hand, and jointly reign in all the works of God? Take up any two blades of grass, and on a little attention you shall find them to be at once similar and dissimilar, the same and different, in different respects. Cast your eyes upon the flowers of the garden, and whilst you distinguish each tribe from another, and every individual from its neighbouring flower, you are sensible of certain characteristics by which they are all distinguished from the trees, the shrubs, and other vegetables. The birds of the air are sufficiently distinguished from the beasts of the field, and the fishes from both; though no beast, bird,

bird, or fish, exactly resembles another in every particular. And notwithstanding that boundless variety which appears in the human kind, not only in those who inhabit distant climes and regions, but in the individuals of the same province, and even of the same family, yet still the human form is preserved entire and exact. And may it not be so with the human mind?

Amidst that variety and opposition of opinions which puzzle and confound our modern sceptics, may there not be found an uniformity of sentiments, and unanimity of judgment about certain truths? Or, if that is difficult to be discovered, may not certain fundamental truths of theology, ethics, politics, and œconomics, be pointed out, which all men of all ages and nations, if not actually agreed in, would readily assent to, upon their being justly exhibited? Many truths there may be, and those the most evident and important, which never came under the consideration of some minds, or have been but badly or imperfectly

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represented to them, which, however, if fairly stated, and fully proposed, would be as quickly perceived, and readily assented to, as the eye distinguishes colours, or the mind, by that organ, pronounces upon the different forms of visible objects.

There are, no doubt, in the woods of America, and the wastes of Africa, multitudes of human creatures utterly ignorant of fundamental truths with which we are acquainted. Are they therefore incapable of pronouncing upon them when fairly proposed? There may be savages who never saw a prism or a cube: but no human being, if not an idiot, is incapable of distinguishing the one from the other, when set before him. Present the rudest savage with a sphere, a cone, a cylinder, or a cube, formed according to the exactest rules of art, and he has no occasion for a mathematician to acquaint him with the obvious properties of those figures; for he perceives them at once by the glance of his eye: and the oftener he views them, understands them
the

the better ; till by repeated observation, he forms a judgment of them in common with every other man.

If one is a rational creature, and in the full exercise of faculties essential to beings of that order, he will, on due acquaintance with regular and well-proportioned objects, arrive at ideas in common with all other rational beings, and such as cannot be attained by brutes and idiots. A horse, or an idiot, is insensible to the symmetry of his habitation, and the elegance of its furniture. They are struck and pleased with what tinkles and glitters, but know nothing of the entertainment and delight of a rational mind. But set before a wild Indian a rude heap of materials on one hand, and pieces of wood and stone, justly formed, and regularly disposed, on the other, he will immediately perceive the difference ; and not only make a distinction, but give a preference of the one to the other : and the more he attends to the distinction, the greater that preference will be. He may not be capable of distinguishing at

first view between the face of a huge rock and the frontispiece of a magnificent building, because he is alike struck with the variety and grandeur of both : but shew him a few pillars and arches, exactly formed, and placed in proper points of view, and lead him on from what is simple to what is more complex, and he will gradually arrive at a discernment of the true beauties of architecture, and soon be made sensible of the excellence of just design.

Nor will our savage shew less capacity in discovering the beauties of character and conduct, if the same justice is done him on the one subject as on the other. Set piety, justice, fortitude, the love of the human kind, of our country, our friends, in full view, and in a proper point of light ; and if the operation of his mind be not obstructed by some powerful passion or prejudice, he will pronounce in the same manner with the rest of mankind. He will want no divine or philosopher to demonstrate our obligation to be grateful to our benefactors, to give e-
very

very man his due, to love and reverence our parents, to cherish and form our children, and to demean ourselves upon the whole with propriety and dignity suited to the rank we hold in nature, and to make the proper acknowledgments to our greatest benefactor, the author of our being and felicity. All these obligations, like the light of the sun, discover themselves by their native evidence; and a conduct corresponding to them is as easily distinguished from its contrary as light from darkness.

It is the business then of divines and philosophers to set the right and wrong of conduct in their full light and proper point of view. But to infuse principles into the human mind, or to prove their reality by foreign evidence, is a foolish and vain attempt; since, with regard to these first principles of right conduct, every man is self-taught; or, to speak more properly, is taught of God. The law of his nature is written upon his heart, which makes him a law to himself. It is written, to use the language
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of scripture, not on perishable materials,
“ but on the spirit of man ; and not with
pen and ink, but by the Spirit of the
living God.”

C H A P. II.

Prejudices and passions may suppress, but cannot extinguish common sense.

TO confute this doctrine, and to prove, on the contrary, that no original perceptions belong to the human mind, but that, like a *tabula rasa*, it is fitted to receive whatever impressions are made upon it, examples are produced, not only of single persons, but of whole nations, entertaining sentiments directly opposite to what we call *original*, and derived from God : Some who pay no homage to a superior being ; others who murder their parents, when through age or infirmity they become burdensome ; others who castrate and fatten their children for slaughter ; the practice also of putting

putting weak children to death, for reasons of state; and of others exposing them to every disastrous accident from parsimony, even in the civilized states of Greece; with the many instances of unnatural lewdness so commonly practised both in barbarous and polished nations, are much insisted on.

But this shocking detail, whatever appearance it hath of proof, is really none at all: for it proves too much, and concludes as strongly against our natural affections, as against a natural sense of right and wrong. That human creatures have an inherent love and tenderness for their offspring, the same in kind, though not in degree, with other animals, is generally admitted. But from the examples produced it appears, that in some nations parents have counteracted, if not destroyed, this powerful principle. Shall we then conclude, that this principle is adventitious, and not original to the human kind? Hardly will the boldest reasoner carry the argument so far. If therefore a natural instinct, an
instinct

instinct which we have in common with other animals, may in so amazing a manner be stopped in its exercise, and suppressed by multitudes of people, barbarous and civilized, need we wonder at their overcoming, in some instances, that more delicate perception which is peculiar to the rational mind. And if from such flagrant examples of mens sacrificing to ungoverned appetites the known and undoubted principles of nature, we cannot argue against the reality of these principles, shall we conclude, that there are no original sentiments of right and wrong, of merit and demerit, because mankind do not regulate their conduct by these sentiments? yea, though in manifold instances they act against them, and though in some they have, in appearance at least, totally destroyed them? The conclusion must indeed be of a different kind.

But why have our objectors gone back to the records of antiquity, and searched the remotest parts of the globe for examples of the perversion of human nature,
when

when too many such are to be met with, in too great variety and abundance, much nearer home? In Popish countries, it is alledged, that inhuman parents force their innocent daughters to renounce all the joys of life, and devote themselves to solitude, — an hideous, irksome, and insupportable solitude, in an abhorred monastery, from a principle merely of barbarous frugality. In our own country, instances are not wanting of inhumanity equally base and barbarous; parents forcing their daughters to take upon them solemn vows of love and constancy to persons whom they cannot love, and practising this cruelty in cool blood, and with full deliberation. It is true, that in this part of the world, children do not put their parents to death to save the expence of their maintenance; but too many wish and long for their departure, and visibly grudge them their share in the common enjoyments of life. Mothers do not fatten and feed upon their infants; but they neglect them; they harden their hearts against their
wants

wants and necessities; and for the pleasure of gadding abroad, and through the love of dress and gaming, shew a strange insensibility to their sufferings in body and mind.

To pass over the vices that are to be met with in the extremes of high and low life, (the scum and dregs of a nation), amongst whom all the oblique arts of dissimulation, fraud, and pilfering, are practised without remorse, let it be remembered, that not long since the character of a rake was in reputation amongst the middle ranks; and the sons and representatives of reputable families prided themselves in vices as shameful and offensive as the guts and garbage which make the ornament and entertainment of the Hottentots. And still among our very fine folks, you see as little regard to their Maker in their public and private behaviour, in their families, in their most retired conversation, as travellers and sea-captains report of the inhabitants of the Cape.

Now, should an Indian Bramin take
these

these particulars, which are not exaggerated, under consideration, and argue from them in the manner of our modern free-thinkers, might he not with equal justice conclude, that we had no fixed principles of piety, no inbred sense of justice, humanity, temperance, or truth?

But what judgment shall we ourselves form of these particulars? For we, it is certain, can better judge of human nature by what passes amongst ourselves, than by scraps of ancient history, or the transient remarks of travellers.

We cannot at this distance enter fully into the sentiments of those Greek fathers and mothers who exposed or murdered their children; and less can we account with certainty for the barbarous practices of a people we are little acquainted with. But from plain and undoubted symptoms we may affirm, that the most abandoned in our own country are conscious of the wrong course of life they pursue. Not only can they not bear being reproached with inhumanity, impiety, or debauchery, by their enemies; but

but they do not love to have these things mentioned by their friends ; and least of all do they chuse to make them the subject of their own entertainment. Many of these enormities they may laugh over in gay conversation ; but from the smallest trial it appears they cannot bear to make them the subject of cool thought and impartial consideration. They may perhaps have lost all feeling, (for one cannot imagine the degrees of insensibility men may arrive at by practice), but not the secret consciousness of wrong. There is not a human creature who lives in the neglect or violation of his known duty to God, his neighbour, or himself, but knows he is wrong, however little he may be concerned about it.

What then shall we conclude upon the whole, but that every one in doing wrong does violence to himself, to the original principles of his nature, to nature's sacred laws, and to the author of those laws ? Upon the whole, it will be found, that amidst that variety of imaginations, affections, and appetites, by which the
human

human mind is distracted, God hath not left himself without a witness, in as much as he hath given men a sense of right and wrong, of good and ill desert, for the regulation of their conduct ; how little soever they may regulate themselves by it, and however much, by criminal negligence, they may, in manifold instances, bring themselves to a level with the inferior animals, and indeed to a condition far more horrid and deplorable.

C H A P. III.

The same subject continued.

IF, instead of conjecture, and of opinions and reasonings founded on conjecture, men would attend to the operations of nature, and take their information from it, they might come to an understanding on all interesting subjects ; and on this, in particular, would be satisfied, that moral agents are not left to the uncertain direction of casual impressions ;

sions : but as the material and animal world are governed by fixed and steady laws, so God hath implanted in moral agents a perception and feeling of right and wrong, of duty and interest, of good and ill desert, which they too often neglect and counteract ; but which, if they attended to, and complied with, would, under the conduct of the sovereign mind, guide them to that perfection which belongs to their rank.

As naturally as heavy bodies roll downwards, and light bodies move upwards, so naturally does every living creature pursue what is agreeable, and fly from what is disagreeable and offensive. This affection may be called the first law of nature ; and is common to us with inferior animals ; and being of equal necessity for the preservation of our natural lives, its operations are as strong, constant, and unintermitting, as those of the heart or lungs. But we have affections, as well as perceptions, as hath been fully shewn above, which other animals have not. We derive pleasant sensations from
objects

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objects well proportioned, beautiful, and grand; and not from objects of sense only, but from actions, tempers, and characters, of the amiable and estimable kind. We are as naturally, though perhaps not so strongly, desirous of our own and other peoples approbation, as of objects of sense and imagination that are agreeable, and capable of forming a judgment of internal as well as external worth.

These powers of the human soul, like those of the body, may be much enlarged and improved by exercise, and in quickness and strength may exceed each other to a surprising degree, in proportion to the exercise we give them. By frequent exertion, and much exercise, some powers of the human soul do not only overtop and overpower, but suppress, and in a manner swallow up the rest, and draw the whole force of the soul to themselves; from whence arises that strange variety of sentiments, affections, and characters, which gives occasion to this

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controversy about the authority of common sense.

Some have so abandoned themselves to the pleasures of sense, as to show little relish of any thing else: others are so enamoured of elegance in external forms, as to sacrifice lower gratifications to these more refined pursuits: and a few are so devoted to what is right and praise-worthy in practice, as to make every thing yield and give way to that. The bulk of mankind have no fixed scope or steady direction. By turns they affect what is agreeable to sense, what is elegant and grand, what is laudable and virtuous, and make the one by turns take place of the other, or endeavour the best they can to reconcile these divers, and often contradictory pursuits. But mankind throughout their whole conduct, however variable, inconsistent, and absurd, discover the same original principles; and to a judicious eye, that variety and contradiction of character and conduct to be found in individuals or bodies of men, appears to be nothing else than various exertions

exertions of the same original powers differently modified.

Our bodily appetites are of earlier and quicker growth than our love of elegance and grandeur ; and our love of external grandeur gets the start, and maintains its precedence to the love of virtue. The two first affections have also the advantage of acting more spontaneously, and with less dependence on judgment and free choice than the last. The instances therefore of those who have not their bodily appetites, and love of pomp and elegance, in full strength, are rare. But multitudes of mankind have the love of internal worth and dignity in a very low degree ; and in some who have been neglected in their education, or have abused themselves by bad habits, it seems wholly to disappear. But this gives no ground to suspect that the affection is not an original part of our frame. It may be real, though weak : it may exist, though it does not exert itself : and tho', being long neglected, it may seem to vanish, yet it is not extinct. It can be rou-

fed by accidents ; and there are many instances of its being put into full exertion by sudden and violent shocks.

It would be unreasonable to expect that knaves, debauchees, and tyrants, should have the same feeling, or even the same perception of moral excellence, with the rest of mankind. Whoredom and wine take away the heart, as the scripture speaks ; and avarice and ambition have a strange power of blinding the judgment, as well as of corrupting the affections, and of begetting an amazing insensibility to all rights human and divine. Anger in its extreme leaves no room for pity ; and hatred confirmed goes near to suppress all sentiments of humanity. The soul inflamed with lust forgets its dignity ; and by being often debased, makes little account of many things which nature abhors. Nor are we much to wonder if men of sense, yea, and men of probity, long habituated to a total forgetfulness of God, should look upon the plainest and most important truths of religion

ligion as little better than dreams or chimeras.

Such is the power of habit, and so strong the tendency of vicious indulgence to pervert the judgment, as well as to stupify the heart, that instead of wondering at bad mens having so little sense of right, we ought rather to wonder that they have any at all. Yet certain it is, they retain sentiments of piety, justice, fortitude, and temperance; and upon occasion will show, that they do retain them, and cannot be wholly divested of them.

Alexander the tyrant of Phœria, a monster of cruelty, was moved to that degree with a representation of the miseries of Priam's family, as he saw them represented in a tragedy of Euripides, that he burst into tears; and being under a necessity of quitting the theatre, expressed his astonishment to those about him, that he who had wantonly burnt cities, and butchered multitudes of his own innocent subjects without remorse, should enter so deeply into the concerns of stran-

gers. But in this he did no more than give a striking instance of the justice of the poet's sentiment, *Naturam expellas furca, tamen usque recurret*. Let a tyrant, a debauchee, or a knave, give attention to a lively representation of human actions, real or feigned, and he will soon take side with him who is in the right; will love, esteem, and be interested for the man of worth, and have the opposite character in contempt and detestation. It is needless to mention the horrors with which impious persons are sometimes seized at the approach of death, and the qualms of conscience to which they are frequently subject upon the ordinary occurrences of life: but there is one instance of the human soul adhering tenaciously to its original sentiments, that deserves particular notice. That numbers of both sexes have made many attempts to extinguish that chastity by which nature hath distinguished us from the brutes, and have actually gone near to effect it, but were seldom or never able to accomplish their design fully,

fully, is very well known. Some feeling of shame, some degree of modest reserve, something of the original distinction between the man and the brute, will upon occasion bewray itself in the most abandoned characters.

It may be alledged, that the effect of early education, and long-continued habits, bears so near a resemblance to nature, that it is difficult to distinguish the one from the other. But the fact is otherwise. The distinction is obvious; and mankind have with great propriety pointed it out, by calling those good or bad dispositions acquired by education or habit, a *second nature*. And we leave it to philosophers to judge, whether there could be a second nature without a first: that is, whether creatures could be formed or trained to any fixed disposition or habit of acting, if there were not original principles implanted in their frame? Any one who resolves the various pursuits of mankind into culture or custom, without a just regard to the laws of nature, would judge as absurdly, as he who
resolved

resolved the operations of machinery into the skill of the artist; who indeed gives the combination and adjustment of the powers, but did not create them, and who could have done nothing at all, if these powers were not created to his hand.

The influence of education is no doubt amazingly great; and it is difficult to say to what height of perfection creatures may be raised to by proper training. But has education or culture a creative power? and can it produce any growth of any kind, the seeds and principles of which we do not find in nature? Does the utmost skill of the most dexterous managers of brutes ever raise them to a behaviour above their rank, or to any thing more than a mimicry of human actions? On the other hand, have the refinements of luxury or sophistry been able to extinguish all sense of religion and virtue in the most degenerate race of men? By too little, and too much thinking; by delusive imaginations, and repeated indulgences; but, above all, by a long-continued

nued subjection to their lower appetites, many have gone far to extinguish their original sentiments ; but have not been able to extinguish them wholly, because nature is against them.

C H A P. IV.

We have a right to appeal from common opinion, which is often on the side of error, to common sense, which is always on the side of truth.

WE may now hope to bring this troublesome and foolish controversy to a final issue, by pointing out a material distinction, which is perpetually overlooked. However strange it may appear, yet, in fact, people of very good understanding do confound common sense with common opinion, taking it for granted, that whatever is obvious to all, must be believed by all ; and that whatever is not actually believed by all, or the greatest part of mankind, cannot be obvious.

obvious. But this way of thinking is in flat contradiction to common observation.

Would men look abroad, not to remote regions, but to those of their own acquaintance, they would find abundant instances of persons of good sense overlooking the most obvious truths, and most undoubted maxims, not only in religion and morals, but in common prudence; and perhaps there is not a thinking man who may not recollect several instances of his having done so in the trivial and momentous concerns of life, and wondering at himself for so doing. Our doing so appears strange, because we are early taught to form our judgment rather by abstract ideas than matter of fact; and by what, according to the rules of reason, we expect should happen, than by what actually does. But when we are accustomed to judge more by what actually happens than by what we might reasonably expect, we will no longer be surpris'd at the irrational and absurd opinions and practices of mankind; and easily believe, that common

mon sense and common opinion may be often different, and sometimes opposite to one another.

It is not long since the friends of religion were anxiously concerned to find all nations agree in the primary truths, especially in that capital one, the being and perfections of God: but finding themselves a little disappointed by our latest accounts of savages, they begin to drop that topic of reasoning; and may soon be satisfied with those truths being obvious, though they are not admitted by all: nor need they be much disturbed though the bulk of mankind adopt the grossest absurdities in contradiction to them.

Mr. Hume, in his Natural History of Religion, which he judiciously calls the history of the *prejudices* and *passions*, and not of the *reason* of mankind, gives such an account of the religious sentiments and practices of all nations, civilized as well as savage, and Christian as well as Heathen, as must be allowed to be extremely nonsensical; and, applied to rational

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tional beings, would have passed for a most extravagant romance, if he had not been supported as he is by well-known facts. Perhaps Mr. Hume hath not been at due pains to collect those eruptions of light and truth which are to be found in every system, the most irrational and unmanly. But his account, upon the main, must be admitted, to the disgrace of the human kind; and had it appeared thirty or forty years ago, might have passed for a full answer to many idle descants upon the sufficiency of the light of nature.

The same acute and elegant writer, in his dissertation on the passions, presents us with a view of the judgment we form of our own merit in such a variety of instances, so weak, so childish, so absolutely false and silly, that we would gladly disavow it if we could. But there is no resisting the truth of facts. The ideas we form of ourselves are indeed as unworthy of rational beings, as those we form of God.

The men of wit and humour, whether
in

in prose or verse, give pictures of human life, with a delineation of the sentiments of mankind, that are absolutely ridiculous. Perhaps the colouring in many places is overcharged, and the picture is a little above the life: but if the resemblance were not real, and in the most striking features did not correspond to nature, men of judgment could not be entertained and improved as they are by such writings. The letter from the ambassador of Bantam is not the single instance in which Mr. Addison, the most gentle satirist that ever wrote, represents the manners and sentiments of his countrymen in several respects below the dignity of rational beings.

The author of the Fable of the Bees attempted a demonstration of our ideas of virtue being false and fantastical, founded upon the prevailing principles and sentiments of mankind, and gave no small alarm. Why? — Because every one was convinced that his premisses were true, or very near the truth; and not being aware of the distinction between com-

mon opinion and common sense, were dreadfully afraid that they could not deny him his conclusion.

Is it necessary to pursue any farther this disagreeable detail of the follies of mankind? A witty French writer hath the following observations, which, if they are not strictly just, will be allowed to be entertaining. “ ’Tis customary in
 “ our courts of justice, to determine causes by a plurality of voices. This is
 “ doing too great an honour, methinks,
 “ to our magistrates: ’tis supposing that
 “ the majority are sufficiently endued
 “ with integrity and discernment. I
 “ question whether it would not be a better way to regulate the sentence by the
 “ judgment of a minority. Is it not
 “ more reasonable to suppose, that out
 “ of twenty-five counsellors there are five
 “ of them men of sagacity, than to presume there are twenty? Sagacity is
 “ not so common an accomplishment.
 “ Notwithstanding the paradoxical air
 “ which this opinion seems to carry with
 “ it at first sight, yet the Jewish legislator
 “ tor

loss to find the last distinct from, and often in direct opposition to the former.

No number of mankind have strength of mind to guard against the folly of valuing themselves upon their progenitors ; not on those only who have been persons of distinguished worth, for here indeed there is at least the shadow of reason ; but on those whose sole merit consisted in being for several generations possessed of a certain quantity of land, or sums of money, which enabled them to eat certain meats, and drink certain drinks, and to attract the gazing multitude by a certain elegance and splendor of furniture and equipage. Scarce one of ten of the species but finds his mind blown up a little upon the mention of such progenitors, or sunk in proportion upon the most distant hint of deriving his pedigree from those differently accoutred and endowed. But is there one above the level of an idiot, or whose mind has not been crazed by family-tales, who, if he appeals to himself, will not frankly own, that all such glorying is silly and nonsensical. Here then is
common

common sense in direct opposition to the most common and prevailing way of thinking. Every one almost may find the operation of both within his breast; and which shall prevail, depends entirely upon the justice he does himself. It is needless to mention how apt the generality of mankind are to raise their crest upon the possession of riches, an elevation to some place of rank and dignity, or even being honoured with a high-sounding title; and how extremely foolish it is to ascribe any other worth to these things than arises from their due use and proper application. Perhaps men of superior parts, genius, and learning, may think, that on the sole consideration of these advantages they have a right to raise their crest: and Mr. Pope frankly owns, that he did so upon the consciousness of his musical powers: but in so doing, he, as justly as prettily, compares himself to those beasts of burden, who seem to be proud of that chime of bells which their masters bestowed on them for diminishing the pain of their labour.

This age can furnish abundance of examples of very pretty fellows, who plume themselves upon a bold defiance of Almighty God, or upon behaving towards him on all occasions with a polite insensibility : but scarce is there one so void of understanding as to satisfy himself concerning the propriety and fitness of such behaviour. We do not want those of cultivated understanding, who, without remorse, and perhaps without blushing, can sacrifice the honour and happiness of amiable simplicity and innocence to the gratification of a brutish passion ; or the glory and interest of their country to sordid avarice : but is there a man so abandoned of reason, of conscience, and of all those perceptions and feelings which belong to the human kind, as inwardly to approve of such villany ? Perversions of judgment by the prevalence of false opinion, strengthened by bad practice, are confessedly too numerous : but the extinction of common sense takes place only on the extinction of rationality.

What

What mother of the human kind is there who does not find herself urged by duty as well as by instinct, to a tender care of her offspring? What parent, child, brother, or friend, is not conscious of obligation to the various duties arising from these relations, with self-approbation on the fulfilment, and reproach and self-condemnation upon the neglect or violation of them? It is quite superfluous to mention the unanimous applause bestowed upon just, kind, and friendly actions, with that displeasure and detestation of the contrary, from an inbred sense of moral worth and excellence peculiar to the rational mind. We have already taken notice, and do not scruple to repeat, that our personal safety and happiness is not intrusted to self-love merely as an instinct, but along with it we have a plain sense of obligation, with a bitter regret attending our not fulfilling it in concerns of consequence. The exquisite pain which one suffers upon throwing away an estate at play, in comparison with the regret another may have

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upon losing his estate by accidental calamity, or the iniquity of the times, is a proof of the reality and strength of this principle not to be overlooked. It is impossible for human creatures to have intercourse with one another, without acquiring ideas of *mine* and *thine*, with a consciousness of obligation to give every one his due, and of the iniquity of violating this obligation. That esteem and suitable returns of benevolence are due of right to benefactors; and that on the first notice we have of a being of absolute perfection, to whom we are indebted, and on whom we depend, for all our happiness, we ought, to our utmost ability, to love, honour, and obey him, is absolutely self-evident.

Finally, that we ought to be careful of ourselves and our interests; that we ought to take proper care of our offspring, to love our friends, our relations, our fellow-citizens, and, in a word, the human kind; that we ought to be grateful to benefactors, and to give every one his due; and, above all, that we ought to
give

give all due honour, worship, and obedience, to the greatest and best of beings, our greatest and best benefactor; — these are obligations so palpable, that to apprehend them needs no more than simple attention, and too evident in themselves to require or admit of any proof or confirmation from foreign evidence. The rational mind perceives them at once, as the eye perceives the difference of colours, or the obvious distinction of external figure; the difference, for instance, between a circle and a square: and all attempts to demonstrate them are equally absurd with a formal proof that a circle is a circle, that a square is a square, and that a circle is not a square.

B O O K VII.

The assertions of sceptics and infidels ought to be tried at the bar of common sense.

C H A P. I.

Reasoning with sceptics and infidels about primary truths doth more harm than good.

NO defect in modern education is more to be regretted than the little pains taken to acquaint young people with the distinction between first and secondary truths, and to impress their tender minds with a true sense of their obligation to proportion their assent to the evidence of things. The ill consequences of this defect appear often not only in the learned, but in men of business. You can hardly attend to two men who differ on any subject, but you may

may observe them in their turns take for granted what is doubtful, and question indubitable truths. Nothing is more common than to see those who intend the same thing, and have met together to promote the same purpose, run into endless and perplexed reasonings, and be under a strange inability of coming to a point, even on plain subjects, through a habit they have contracted of affirming, denying, and doubting, arbitrarily.

Is it to be conceived, that men of sense, and of otherwise upright disposition, would go against the first principles of civil and religious life, as they often have done, for the sake of opinions of doubtful evidence, and at a very great distance from primary truths, if they had been taught to make a point of proportioning their faith to the evidence of things? A little common sense and common honesty, one would think, might be sufficient to have prevented that straining at gnats, and swallowing of camels, in religion and politics, which hath produced so many horrid scenes in all ages. But common
sense

sense and common honesty have not been cultivated with due care in the schools, and till of late were too commonly sacrificed to the skill of reasoning.

Reasoning, till of late, was considered in the same light with the art-military, that allows of all the various methods of stratagem and violence: so that the arguing of most people was but a sort of fencing at best, in which the antagonists shewed their skill and their strength, rather than their candor and judgment. Men who would scorn to lie or dissemble on other occasions, made no scruple of advancing what best served their purpose in the course of debate.

The human mind hath been thought to resemble a pair of scales, and arguments have been compared to weights which gave the decision according to the quantity laid in the one or the other scale. Till the late discovery made by Dr. Butler, little regard was paid to the power the mind hath in casting the balance, and making either scale preponderate, as suited its purpose. It seemed
to

to be universally received, that controversies were to be determined, not by the integrity of the judge, but by the number and weight of arguments laid in his mind. Many said, and seemed actually to believe, that they could not help their way of thinking, or be made accountable for the judgment they formed on any subject.

Hence arose the idle notion of sceptics and infidels, that it was incumbent upon Christian writers to turn the balance of their minds, and overset, in a manner, their understanding by a multiplicity and weight of arguments in favour of religion. Hence also that ill-judged project in the friends of religion, of heaping up arguments on arguments, and volumes on volumes, in confutation of manifest absurdities.

To state the primary truths in their native light and strength, and in comparison with their opposite falsities, and to show in the clearest, plainest manner, which ought to preponderate, was in justice due to the public. But to trace every
very

very conceit of every bold objector through all the windings of abstruse and sophistical reasoning, or to offer laborious and minute defences of truths, which neither require nor admit of any, was ill advised.

It was no doubt proper to detect the scandalous shuffling of Collins, to expose the rambling conceits of Lord Shaftesbury, the dangerous paradoxes of Mr. Hume, and the presumptuous boldness of Lord Bolingbroke. It might also be fit to take some notice of the quibbles of inferior writers. But to engage the attention of a whole nation to a formal dispute between grave divines and writers of this stamp, about the truth of religion, as if this was a point yet unsettled, was a manner of proceeding much below the dignity of the subject, and from which little good could be expected. From the common effects produced on the minds of the multitude, by attending the pleadings in a contentious lawsuit, one might foretell the consequences of this ill-judged measure.

Two

Two gentlemen of good understanding, but addicted a little too much to humour or interest, cannot rest in such evidence of their rights as gives satisfaction to their impartial neighbours; and not adverting to the operation of their passions, invent fictitious evidences in support of contrary claims; and having rashly engaged in a law-suit, apply each to an able lawyer to give strength to his plea, and are not disappointed.

The gentlemen of the law being skilled in all the arts of arranging facts as suits their purpose, and of giving all variety of forms, with as great variety of colouring, to their different and opposite reasoning, set forth the claims of their clients with all the force their hearts can wish. The auditors stand amazed; and even they who previously knew the truth, are in some degree puzzled by the dexterity of the advocates. Almost every one is of the mind of him who spoke last; and excepting the judges, and those few who found their knowledge upon facts, scarce
one

one can pronounce with judgment on the whole.

The judges, indeed, through a comprehensive knowledge of the laws, and their skill in applying proper evidence to contested facts, and by giving strict attention to the course of the process, and tracing the claimants through all their windings, arrive at a true decision. But the multitude, if they do not rest in the determination of the judges, go away greater fools than they came, taking sides, and maintaining disputes with one another, as their fancy, their interest, or their passions direct.

Thus it frequently happens in lawsuits; and thus precisely it hath happened in our controversies about religion. And how could it be otherwise? For, alas! how little are the bulk of mankind qualified for entering into such controversies, and how few of them can with any propriety be deemed judges?

Would any wise parent treat his child in the same manner as our spiritual fathers have treated the bulk of mankind?

Suppose,

Suppose, for instance, a youth of no contemptible parts had taken it into his head to question whether light, heat, and vegetation, flow from the beams of the sun, or from some hidden and unknown cause; whether that beautiful line of Mr. Pope, “An honest man’s the noblest work of God,” has any foundation in the nature of things; and whether Julius Cæsar was indeed stabbed in the senate-house, or if all that is said about that matter be only a fiction of some after age, framed with a view to flatter the emperors, by rendering the republican party odious:—should a young man hold up his face to such surmises, would his father enter into a grave and learned confutation of them? I trow not. He might smile, or he might frown; and a Greek or Roman father would in this case think of a large dose of hellebore: but to make such absurdities a subject of serious debate, would not occur to any wise parent.

A concern for the credit of religion hath, no doubt, engaged many in its defence; and the principle, it must be

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owned, is laudable : but whether in these defences they have indeed consulted the credit of religion, may be very much questioned. A man of character would reckon himself little beholden to the officious zeal of those friends who took the trouble of answering every groundless calumny thrown out against him by idle or ill-designing people. Now can any man's character be more above exception than is the truth of religion ?

Is not the innate evidence of natural religion, and the well-known spirit of the Christian revelation, taken along with the manner of its publication and reception in the world, (to say nothing of our Saviour's express promise), sufficient to set every good man's heart at ease, and to assure him of its triumphing over all the assaults of its adversaries ? And ought there not to be a direct appeal to every man's breast on those plain facts ? Ought not infidels and sceptics to be called upon to make good their charge of imposture against the Lord Jesus Christ, or be held as slanderers, rather than that his friends

friends and followers should give undue countenance to the slander by their over-anxious care to wipe it off? There is no end to surmises, jealousies, and doubts, when they are once indulged: but there is in the world a certain portion of common sense and common honesty, to which the cause of religion may be intrusted with safety.

A concern for the salvation of mens souls is the common and most justifiable cause of the zeal of the clergy, in maintaining the controversy with sceptics and infidels: but there is another species of incredulity more common, and not less pernicious, which better deserves to be the object of their zeal *. The number
of

* A concern for the interests of religion and mankind makes it necessary to take notice, that the preachers of the gospel do generally commit a mistake of very bad consequence, in employing the power of reasoning where it is unnecessary and improper, and neglecting to employ it where it is not only highly proper, but extremely necessary. The whole force of logic is often employed to convince men of truths which they know already, and firmly believe; and but little pains taken to inform or convince them of truths no less interesting and important;

of those who deny or doubt of the truth of religion, is inconsiderable, compared with

ant, which they either overlook, or do not agree to: Thus we have many sermons employed chiefly in demonstrating our obligation to yield all due worship and obedience to God; whilst little or nothing is done to convince mankind of their failing, so grossly as they do, in the fulfilment of this obligation; — their suffering themselves to be diverted from attending on the duties of his public worship, by occurrences that would not divert them from paying due homage, or the common offices of civility, to any other superior; — their employing that time and leisure in frivolous amusements, which ought to be consecrated to the duties of his secret worship, and behaving on ordinary occasions with less fidelity and loyalty of heart towards God, than any dutiful servant or subject would observe towards his master or his prince. Our obligation to do to others as we would be done by, is in like manner copiously explained and enforced in sermons; whilst little or no notice is taken of a variety of instances in common life, of men using one measure for themselves, and another for their neighbour, and grossly trespassing against this golden rule of equity. In like manner, we are strictly enjoined to be temperate in all things; and the indispensable necessity of this duty is fully demonstrated; without any care to set before mankind those many vain, silly, foolish, and sinful indulgences we give into, without remorse and feeling, to the prejudice of our interests in time and eternity.

These violations of duty, you will say, are so obvious, as not to need being mentioned. But they cannot be

with those immoral persons who give no credit to express declarations of scripture which

be more obvious than our obligation to the several duties; and why so copious on the one, and so sparing and reserved in setting forth the other? You will say, that having clear conceptions of our duty, it is easy to see our departure from it. No doubt it is, if we were willing to bring our temper and manners to that standard: but that we are not; and is the thing therefore which needs to be done for us by those who have the charge of souls. Besides, the obligations of duty are simple truths, of obvious and easy conception; whereas our conformity or disconformity to them is a complex object, in which many circumstances must be attended to, and accurately and impartially judged of. Add to this the numberless artifices by which we endeavour to elude our obligations, or to justify, excuse, or extenuate our neglect or violation of them; to check and correct which will require all the skill in reasoning which our teachers are possessed of.

Will it be necessary to take notice of the prevailing mode of proving the truth of the Christian revelation to people, of whom ninety-nine in a hundred have much greater need to be convinced of the indispensable necessity of their being more careful than they are to fulfil the conditions on which salvation is offered in the gospel? It is truly moving, to see hundreds of people meet regularly once a week at least, to receive instruction in matters of the last consequence, and going away not much wiser than they came, because their teacher, in compliance with common practice, hath entertained them with truths which they knew and believed already,

which exclude them from the kingdom of God : and the number of these bears small proportion to others, who, in contradiction to the whole tenor of scripture, content themselves with a partial conformity to the precepts of the gospel. There are also several well-meaning persons seduced by the subtilty of their own passions, and the example of others, into too favourable an opinion of their state and character, who, with proper care, might be undeceived, and of consequence would be persuaded to apply themselves with greater earnestness than they do to the practice of religion. Ought not the safety of these to be the chief object of the clergy's zeal ; and ought that power of reasoning, so necessary for correcting their mistakes, to be laid out in the con-

and said little to them about other truths, of which they know little and believe less. These remarks are, with all submission, offered to the serious consideration of the clergy, to those especially of distinguished zeal and ability, who can best judge of their truth and importance, and are best qualified for introducing a more rational and effectual method for promoting the interests of religion than hath hitherto prevailed.

futation

futation of a few wrong-headed men, who probably would not be convinced if one came to them from the dead?

We would not have taken upon us to pronounce so freely upon this subject, if we were not sure of being supported by the highest authority, even the example of our Saviour. He had the tenderest concern for the salvation of all; but would do nothing to force the belief of any. In proof of his mission he wrought many miracles in the sight of all men, and often appealed to the sufficiency of the attestation: but being solicited to gratify the impertinent curiosity of some unreasonable persons, by still greater or more glaring efforts of his power, he would not comply.

Observing in the infidels of his day, what always appears in disingenuous minds, that the evidence which was sufficient in all other concerns, had no effect in religion, he reprov'd them openly, and again and again pronounced them hypocrites.

He invited all to come to him, rejecting

none who came, and deeply bewailed the perverseness of those who did not; and with great patience and tenderness, unfolded his doctrine to those who were of a docile disposition; but left others in the darkness they affected. From a thorough insight into the human heart, and a just horror of that deep-laid deceit and inflexible obstinacy, which the more it is pressed, does the more resist the truth, and heighten mens condemnation the more, he wisely forbore all improper attempts of subduing the prejudices of very bad men. His common address to mankind was, (and his whole practice corresponded to it), "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

C H A P. II.

The best office to be done for sceptics or infidels is, to divert them from reasoning, and put them on judging of primary truths by their inherent evidence.

“ **A**Nswer not a fool according to his
 “ folly, lest thou be like unto
 “ him,” said Solomon; and again, “ An-
 “ swer a fool according to his folly,” says
 the same inspired writer, “ lest he be wise
 “ in his own conceit.” Every man of
 sense knows how to reconcile these seem-
 ingly opposite injunctions, and also how
 to put them in practice in the common
 affairs of life: and what a pity it is that
 they have not been more attended to in
 maintaining the cause of religion! That
 intemperate love of reasoning which we
 get in the schools hath diverted us from
 complying with the first part of Solo-
 mon’s advice; and we are hindered from
 putting the other part in practice by the
 extreme delicacy of the age, which, how-

ever indulgent to the adversaries of religion, will allow no such privilege to its friends.

Libertine writers have long ago laid aside all respect for the public, or treat it with a mock-reverence, more provoking than downright insult: for not contented with ridiculing opinions or practices of particular sects that might be liable to ridicule, they have made the capital truths of religion a subject of mirth and drollery. They have with unparalleled boldness opposed arbitrary suppositions, and chimerical conjectures, to obvious and interesting truths; and proceeding on those as first principles, have by a sophistry so gross, and so easily seen through, laboured to seduce, and actually have seduced, the thoughtless, the giddy, and the precipitant, from a due attention to their most momentous concerns. This gave no offence, or but small offence, to the public! A few serious Christians might be grieved, and some few of singular discernment might be sensible of the insult; but the public seemed

seemed to be highly entertained. Such is the delicacy of modern politeness! And such it seems is politeness carried to an excess in all ages. The Apostle Paul, in a like case, speaks of the politeness of the Corinthians in this manner: “For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise. For ye suffer if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face.”

But now, on the other hand, if an advocate for religion takes any such liberties, they who call themselves the public are all in an uproar. If from a just indignation at their insulting the common sense of mankind, they expose the futility of sceptics, though in terms the most unexceptionable, one who would be thought a very fine gentleman cries out, Abuse, scurrility! If, in imitation of the great model of meekness, a friend of religion lays open the evasions, shuffling, and, to speak plain, the knavish practices of some of its adversaries, another puts on a solemn air, and cries out, “The
“servant

“servant of the Lord must not strive, but
“be gentle towards all men.”

Now, what is to be done? It seems impossible to comply with the prevailing taste, and at the same time to maintain the dignity of religion. By a modest deference to the surmises of sceptics, we give them an importance, not only in their own eyes, but in the eyes of the multitude, to which they are no wise intitled: and by asserting primary truths with bashful timidity, we sink the credit of religion, already too much sunk in the estimation of the public. Religion ought to be revered as well as believed; and the want of due reverence to its capital truths is not much less pernicious to mankind than infidelity itself. Perhaps this has not occurred to our men of taste, but will be agreed to by all of true judgment; and to it we will stick, in hopes that in time it may become the opinion of the public. “Good sense,” says the Duke de la Rochefaucault, “ought to be the test
“of all rules both ancient and modern:
“whatever

“whatever is incompatible therewith is
“false.”

Bigots, sceptics, enthusiasts, and all who take delight in false and fantastical ways of thinking, are fond of reasoning, but do not love to judge. Whence comes that eagerness to enter into disputes, that zeal in propagating their opinions, and sometimes that impertinent keenness to obtrude them on others, which is so much complained of in men of this character? Are they more convinced of the truth and importance of their hypothesis, than sober Christians are of the fundamental doctrines of religion? So it would seem. But the case is quite otherwise. They are not, and at bottom they cannot be, satisfied with the notions they have adopted; but are fond of supporting them. They dare not trust them to their own cool thoughts, and chuse rather to try their strength on other people. They find their account in reasoning; for whether they are foiled or victorious, they are sure to be confirmed in the way of thinking they affect. But should they
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with coolness and impartiality submit it to their own best judgment, they might be staggered. The best service then to be done for these people is, to divert them as much as possible from reasoning, and to put them on judging.

Sceptics ought to be told, that they have nothing to do with reasoning; that they do not, and indeed cannot, reason, because they want first principles. They will upon occasion draw conclusions favourable to their hypothesis from positions of all kinds; from the dogmata of the learned, from the prejudices of the vulgar, from arbitrary suppositions, and mere chimeras. At other times, they will scarce admit the truth of axioms, dispute the testimony of our senses, and seldom or never stop at the first principles of theology, ethics, or politics. The sceptic hath indeed no first principles, or none that he will stand to; and therefore hath no pretension to reasoning: for reasoning consists in the skill of tracing the connection between first and secondary truths. What the sceptic calls reasoning,
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is no other than unmeaning talk, or loose declamation.

The primary truths of religion ought to be proposed to sceptics, not as points to be disputed, but as first principles; and they should be required to consider them in that light. By comparing them carefully with the opposite absurdities, sceptics may easily determine, whether they belong to that rank, and to what regard they are intitled: but if they decline doing this, there is no remedy. As their will cannot be forced to submit to the divine authority, so neither can their judgment be forced to acknowledge the fundamental truths of religion. The object being fairly presented, and they being possessed of the faculty of judging, it is incumbent upon them to do justice to the truth, and to themselves.

There are truths in nature of which one cannot doubt, if he would; or on the belief of which he must proceed in spite of all objections to the contrary. But there are no such truths in religion. Its primary truths enter the mind with
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the same ease, and with the same evidence, with which light enters the eye ; but not irresistibly. The mind of man, like the organ of sight, hath a power of admitting or excluding divine and moral truths, in whole or in part, which it cannot so well exercise upon other objects.

Shrewd objections have been offered to the reality of matter and motion ; to which perhaps neither mathematician nor philosopher can give a full and satisfactory answer. But it is withal impossible to entertain a serious doubt of these realities ; or, whatever doubts we may entertain, it is impossible for one in his senses to found a plan of conduct upon the belief of their non-existence. It is otherwise in religion and ethics, in politics and æconomics. On all these subjects, it is not only possible to start objections that may give disturbance, but very practicable for dishonest minds to cast the balance on the wrong side ; and, partly through artifice, and partly through obstinacy, to maintain a pernicious course of conduct through the whole of life, upon
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on idle suppositions, chimeras, and futilities.

Finally, we may play the fool in the concerns of religion and morality; but care is taken to prevent our doing so in what respects the preservation and management of our life and safety. That the plan of Providence might not be wholly disconcerted by the vices, the follies, and caprice of mankind, God hath so ordered it, that in all those concerns we should be influenced by laws that act as steadily, and almost as irresistibly, as the law of gravitation. But in ethics, politics, and oeconomics, he hath left us in some measure to our own choice: reserving to himself the right of checking or correcting the disorders we create, by a proper distribution of rewards and punishments. A certain degree of care, circumspection, and prudence, is therefore requisite in the conduct of religious and moral life, beyond what is necessary for the safety and preservation of our natural lives; and to give fair advertisement of this to those who deny or doubt

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doubt of the primary truths of religion,
is perhaps the greatest friendship can be
done them by its most zealous advocates.
To argue with them is to trifle. It is
worse than trifling : it feeds the mind with
idle expectations, which end in disappoint-
ment, and gives opportunity to a heart al-
ready too much perverted, to confirm it-
self in its own delusions.

C H A P. III.

The same subject continued.

WE hear it commonly asserted, that
there is no such person as a spe-
culative atheist ; or if any such be, that
he must be mad or delirious. This opi-
nion, which prevails so universally, is not
without foundation : yet as we know per-
sons void of all reason in some particular
cases, who enjoy the full exercise of their
rational powers in all others, there seems
to be no difficulty in conceiving the pos-
sibility of one's being extremely sceptical
with

with regard to some of the plainest and most obvious truths, without being touched with madness or delirium in the ordinary sense of these words. There are certain phænomena in nature which throw a good deal of light upon this subject.

People of good understanding, and otherwise of sound judgment, have, through some unaccountable disorder, been found incapable of admitting the belief of divine goodness and mercy, and proof against all arguments from reason or revelation in favour of these attributes. Besides those instances, which are not uncommon, we often hear religious people and strong believers complain, that at certain times their minds are pestered with strange, absurd, and shocking ideas of God, and under a total indisposition to acquiesce in the great truths of religion. Nay, persons of the firmest texture of mind, and soundest intellects, will upon occasion, find something of this, which they cannot easily account for: and any one who attends to the

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state of his own mind, when disordered by an obstruction in the animal œconomy, will experience such a staggering, or reeling shall I say ? of his rational powers, as may satisfy him concerning the total perversion of judgment some may be under with respect to religion.

If people of good understanding, and in the free and full exercise of their powers on all other subjects, are at times, and often for a long while together, under a strange incapacity of admitting some of the most evident perfections of God ; why may not others of distinguished abilities be all their life indisposed to the belief even of his existence, and of other truths the most obviously certain ? If believers themselves complain of unbelief at certain seasons, and men of coolest heads are, through a disorder which they cannot trace, subject to strange reveries concerning religion ; what occasion to wonder, if at all times, and especially in an age so licentious as the present, there should be found some bright wits of an
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odd and amazing cast of mind with regard to religion ?

How far the folly is natural, and how far acquired ; how much it is to be imputed to the structure of the brain, and how much to the frame of the heart, are questions of difficult decision even to the persons themselves : but that there is a real perversion of the understanding, and such as will baffle all the arts of logic, will not be disputed. There is this remarkable difference between the case of sceptics and of those above mentioned, that the last regret their misfortune, and are earnestly desirous to have it removed ; whereas the other glory in it as an honourable distinction, and employ all their powers rather in cherishing the disease than in procuring a remedy :

*Wit, spirit, faculties, but make it worse ;
Reason itself but gives it edge and power,
As heaven's blest beam turns vinegar more sour.*

Every one knows how much more difficult it is to convince a fool than a wise man, and that a wilful fool, or one who

is so with his own consent and good liking, is of all others the hardest to reclaim. Call to mind the inflexible obstinacy of certain imprudent people, who through the influence of that unaccountable disorder called *whim*, have embraced a system of principles palpably absurd, and visibly destructive of their own and their families interests. Do but recollect the turn of mind, the temper, and behaviour, of those of this character, whether learned or unlearned, stupid or witty, and you will have no occasion to wonder that sceptics and infidels have so long baffled all the labours of the learned.

You know, that all your arguments, however strong, sufficient, and more than sufficient, to give satisfaction to any reasonable man, make no impression, or but a slight impression, on them, and work at best but a temporary and transient conviction; and that whilst the whim lasts, they will either obstinately resist, or artfully evade the strongest possible proof, and hold on their course till they are either absolutely undone, or made
sensible

Ch. III. COMMON SENSE. 341

fenfible of their error by melancholy experience. Now, the part which men act in the affairs of common life, and where their own and their families interests are deeply concerned, they may well be supposed to act towards religion, and the concerns of eternity.

The art of persuasion may produce some good effect, because it hath an influence on the will * ; but where the will
stands

* Fine speaking is often mistaken for the art of persuasion, though the accomplishments are very different. Many arrive at a high degree of the first, without possessing the last in the lowest degree :

His angel tongue no mortal could persuade. POPE.

One may reason with accuracy, acuteness, and force, sufficient to convince the understanding, without making any considerable impression on the will. By embellishing our thoughts with a variety of tropes and figures, one may amuse, entertain, and delight an audience, without prevailing upon them to alter their course. By striking thoughts conveyed in pompous language, and accompanied with all the force of voice, looks, and gesture, one may dazzle the imagination, and raise great commotions in the animal affections, without mending the heart. The heart is the object of persuasion ; and to produce a change in the will is its genuine effect ; such a change as is often produced by the prudent and

stands bent the other way, the art of reasoning hath little efficacy. Indeed when men, turning aside their attention from obvious truth, seem determined to proceed upon conjecture and arbitrary suppositions, one can do little more than warn them of their danger, call upon

affectionate address of tender parents and dear friends; and such a change as was frequently produced by the patriots of Greece and Rome, who managed the multitude with the same skill with which a dextrous rider manages his horse, giving them sentiments, affections, and inclinations, directly opposite to those dictated by their vices. A good understanding and goodness of heart in an eminent degree, with an accurate and extensive knowledge of all the various springs of the human mind, are qualifications the most essential to this noble art. It is capable of the utmost improvement, by repeated exercise, under the direction of just rules, and in imitation of the best models. Next to the practice of heroic virtue it is the most arduous, and next to it is also the most worthy employment to which the human soul can be devoted. It is of the last consequence in the government and preservation of a free state, and is honoured by Almighty God as the chief mean employed in promoting and enlarging his kingdom. It ought to be the favourite study of all who are intrusted with the care of our happy constitution, and still more of those who have the charge of souls; and no doubt will be, when common sense hath got the better of all the remains of false science.

them

them to return, and require them as men of sense and probity to govern themselves in their most important concerns, by that same direction to which they trust in every other concern of moment.

When, through some unhappy bias, your friend is engaged in measures that are destructive, or averse to those that are necessary for his honour and safety, you will incline to reason with him, you will ply him with arguments; and perhaps you ought to do so: but if he is not a person of more candor than is common, you will get answers, replies, and rejoinders in abundance; and shall soon find, that the whole controversy will come to a drawn battle. But if by authority, by reproof, by condescension, by intreaty, or any other of those arts of persuasion which friendship and good sense dictate, you can prevail upon your friend to take his own plan into consideration, and coolly and impartially pronounce upon it, you have done him the best service in your power; and if his measures are as manifestly wrong as you suppose,

you have the best chance of setting him right.

Reasoning and judging are powers nearly allied, but truly distinct ; and have a different, and sometimes a contrary operation. A thousand arts are practised by the one, which have no place in the other. The first may be rendered subservient to almost any purpose : but the last, in plain cases, and in a mind well informed, is generally, if not always, on the side of truth. Of this at least we will be positive, that the artifice employed against obvious truth, may with still greater success be employed against any reasoning, however strong, and strictly conclusive.

Every new medium of proof affords your adversary a new opportunity of escaping from the truth. By using three, six, or ten mediums, you furnish him as many more ways of avoiding conviction for one which he hath when you fairly present him with the truth. Besides, those truths which have their evidence in themselves, come upon the mind with a
force

force superior to what they can derive from any form of reasoning. Add to this, that there is in nature a connection between an immediate perception and feeling, in some degree at least, of obvious and interesting truth: so that if you have procured the one, you may hope for the other.

Upon the whole, to make a due impression on sceptics, or to produce in them that belief which is due to primary truths, it is fit to divert their minds from reasoning, and to put them on viewing those truths in their native evidence, and comparing them with their opposite absurdities, by a simple appeal to common sense.

The author of this essay hath been long of opinion, that as it is impossible for a man of sense to take an attentive survey of the harmony of the universe, and doubt of the being and perfections of God; so it is equally impossible for one of this character to consider with attention certain undoubted facts appearing from the face of the Christian revelation,

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tion, and doubt of its truth. He therefore intended to have brought the primary truths of natural and revealed religion to the bar of common sense by a simple appeal : but in regard that misapprehensions of that tribunal, arising from the refinements of the learned, and the prejudices of the vulgar, do commonly prevail, he found it necessary to begin with removing those prejudices, and restoring the authority of common sense.

LET-

LETTERS.

ADVERTISEMENT,

The following letters contain an answer to a few objections offered to the author by some of his friends, together with an account of that connection betwixt rational perception and the feeling of interesting truth, essential to every rational being, which is often hinted at, but could not be insisted on in the Appeal,

LETTER I.

I AM too well acquainted with the power which habit hath over the judgment, as well as the actions of men, to expect that my Appeal to Common Sense should be received by the bulk of readers as it has been by you. They will agree with me in condemning abstruse, subtle, and laborious reasoning; but will not give up reasoning altogether. They will allow those truths to be obvious; but not being accustomed to rank them with axioms, they will not dispense with some kind of proof, however short and simple. They will grant that the laws of nature result immediately from the contemplation of the phænomena; but will have difficulty in allowing the same evidence to truths which the learned in all ages have been accustomed to deduce by reasoning from known principles. It is not possible to give, all at once, a new and opposite turn to mens
way

way of thinking : but as I hope to satisfy your scruples in a little time, so I believe that in due time the bulk of mankind may be brought to a just way of thinking on this subject.

I remember when the learned were as anxious about the proof of moral obligation as they can be now about the most doubtful positions : and I am persuaded, that if any one had then affirmed, that the obligation of morality was so obvious as to require no proof at all, the assertion would be held as extravagant. One cannot forget the alarm given to the friends of virtue by the publication of an absurd, but shrewd book, called, *The Fable of the Bees*, and the mighty zeal of many writers of character to establish, by much subtile reasoning, a truth which no man of sense doubts of at present, the reality of virtue. There is not an undergraduate of a college, or merchant's clerk, who does not believe, whatever his practice may be, the essential difference between vice and virtue, with the innate excellence of the one, and deformity

mity of the other ; and who does not see at once the ridicule of ranking taper legs and broad shoulders among the virtues. So great is the change which the progress of good sense hath made in so short a time. I am persuaded, that if the above-mentioned book were to make its appearance now, it would be received with contempt equal to the alarm it gave then. It were to be wished that those men of parts, who, according to Mr. Pope's prediction, have been lulled asleep for so long a season, could be fairly roused : for it is probable, that a little farther inquiry by a few such writers as did honour to former reigns, would put the primary truths of religion in their proper light, and banish for ever those frivolous disputes which have been so long the disgrace of the learned.

You call my way of thinking singular ; but in fact it has been long since admitted by the generality of mankind without their perceiving it. Do but recollect how common it is to affirm, that there can be no such person as a speculative atheist.

theist. Observe with what sincerity and firmness this is asserted by learned and unlearned; and how strenuously they maintain, that whoever denies or doubts of the being and perfections of God is a fool or a madman. Now, I desire you to tell me wherein I differ from the bulk of mankind. I have affirmed the being and perfections of God to be obvious to every rational mind; and have of consequence declared speculative atheism to be a species of folly or madness. I have fixed the characteristic of rationality in a power of admitting truths that are obvious on their being fairly proposed; and have of consequence secluded all from that rank of being who discover an incapacity of admitting these truths. Perhaps I have not expressed myself with propriety, have not unfolded the sentiments of mankind with perspicuity: but if men once will look into their own sentiments, they will find them the same with mine. They would not call a man fool or madman because he could not comprehend the reasonings of the learned;

ed; nor would they be rash in calling him so merely because he was a bad reasoner; nor do I think they would so frankly and steadily pronounce all atheists to be fools or madmen, if they did not believe with me that the evidence for the being and perfections of God is so palpably obvious, as necessarily to procure at first sight the assent of every rational being: So that I do no more than bring to light sentiments which have always lain at the bottom of mens minds.

L E T T E R II.

YOU ask me, Whether I should not be glad to see a demonstration of the being and perfections of God? — My answer is, That I should be sorry to see a demonstration of these truths offered to the public, that would not stand the severest trial; and should not be very glad to see one that did: for a demonstration equal to any in Euclid could add nothing to the belief which you and I, and every

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rational being, have of these truths. The mind, I confess, is highly entertained with the regular steps of a well-wrought demonstration, and feels a noble satisfaction on arriving with certainty at the conclusion : but this joy is transient, and not to be compared with the permanent invariable satisfaction with which the mind rests at all times in the obvious indubitable evidence which belongs to primary truths. Be pleased to remember that through weakness of memory, or confusion of thought, we may lose sight of the strict connection of parts which produces a full demonstration. But the obvious distinction betwixt sense and nonsense we can never lose sight of, while we keep ourselves in the exercise of our reason, and think on those subjects as becomes men of judgment : and therefore you may rest assured, that the best proof or demonstration of those truths is, that you cannot admit the supposition of the contrary, without being conscious of your playing the fool or the madman.

Far from depreciating the works of
Ray,

Ray, Derham, and such writers, I would earnestly recommend them to your perusal. Nay, I scruple not to rank them with the best written books of devotion, because you cannot read them with attention, without feeling your rational powers in full exercise, and your heart, at the same time, inflamed with the most sublime affections. But you will remember, that all this is produced, not by trains of laborious reasoning, but by an intuitive view of the perfections of God, as they shine forth in his works. You will also remember, that the impression made on your mind by such writers cannot be permanent, because you cannot always give yourself the same strong and affecting view of the harmony of the universe which they set before you. But you can at any time put yourself in mind, that the world is upheld and governed by a being of absolute perfection; and that you cannot entertain a doubt of this great truth without the imputation of folly or madness; and therefore you ought not to found your faith on a re-

Z 2 presentation

presentation made by the best writers, but on that indubitable evidence belonging to primary truths, which presents itself at first sight to the rational mind. I ought not to retract what I said in commendation of the above-mentioned writers, because it is no more than is due to their merit : but I will add, that by going along with devotional tracts of the common kind, those especially which enter into life and manners, or rather by offering to God the genuine sentiments of your heart, in your own way, upon the duties and occurrences of life, you may acquire a habit of devotion more valuable in all respects than the most sublime affections that can be raised in your mind, by the most sublime writers. In short, to behave as becomes rational beings towards our maker, is the whole of religion ; for which purpose we are furnished with that power, by which he hath distinguished us from idiots and the lower animals : and to persuade men to give due exercise to that power, is the great object of my zeal.

L E T-

L E T T E R III.

YOU very well observe, that though I commonly resolve our knowledge of primary truths into intuition, yet when I explain the manner how we come to the knowledge of these truths, I expressly refuse to resolve it into that source, and content myself with saying, that our knowledge of the primary truths is equally certain with what we have by intuition. I was indeed too scrupulous on that occasion; and if you think it of consequence, I will satisfy you that our knowledge of primary truths hath equal title with our knowledge of all other self-evident truths, to be resolved into intuition. It is true, we can have no knowledge of those truths but by the phænomena of nature: but it is equally true, that we can have no knowledge of any truths, no not of the axioms of the schools, in any other way. The obvious relations of being are allowed to be ob-

jects of intuition : but I ask, whether we could have any idea or perception of these relations, if we had not first perceived the objects related? Could we possibly have perceived the obvious properties of triangles, squares, circles, or any other figures, if we had not first seen those figures by our external senses? We see intuitively that a whole is greater than its part : but could we have perceived this truth, if we had not first perceived a whole and then a part by our bodily organs, and afterwards passed judgment upon them, by that perception and judgment of obvious truth by which we pronounce on all the primary truths of nature? We see then the laws of nature, and the author of these laws, in the self-same manner in which we see all other realities that are allowed in the schools to be objects of intuition.

Quick admission to the mind is not essential to intuition. It belongs to some, but not to all truths which are objects of that faculty. If a truth hath its evidence in itself, it is, according to the meaning of
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of the word, self-evident, and of consequence an object of intuition, whether you take longer or shorter time to perceive that evidence: as, on the other hand, a truth that derives its evidence from its relation to some other truth, is not self-evident, however quickly you may arrive at the knowledge of it. Because the axioms of the schools are seen, as I may say, by a glance of the eye, we demand that all other truths which are self-evident should be perceived in the same manner. But this is a wrong way of thinking; for there are many truths in nature equally self-evident, on which the mind cannot pronounce without long and leisurely attention. There are numberless beauties of nature and art that may be fully comprehended without the assistance of any foreign truth; but not without a careful inspection repeated again and again. A peasant perceives at first sight little or no beauty in a fine piece of painting; but give him time to turn his attention to this and the other feature, and to view it again and again,

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till he becomes acquainted with the object, and he will, in proportion to the degree of rationality of which he is possessed, take up all its beauties. In the same manner may one who is not an idiot apprehend with equal, and indeed with greater ease, all the primary truths, those of religion in particular.

Self-evident truths have generally, but not always, the power of forcing the assent, or not always in the same degree. You cannot, if you would, withhold your assent for a moment from the axioms of the schools, when fairly proposed; but there are many truths in nature, those especially which concern the right conduct of life, equally self-evident, from which men will withhold their assent, in some degree at least, in spite of all that can be done to set them full in their view. That we ought to be grateful to benefactors, and to do to others as we would be done by, are truths as self-evident as any axioms in geometry; but there are numbers of mankind who give them but a faint and feeble assent. Our
assent

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assent to truths of this kind has some connection with the will, and some dependence on it. Their evidence is as clear as a sun-beam ; but as the eye hath a power of letting in more or less of the light of the sun, so the mind hath a power of admitting these truths in greater or less degrees at pleasure. They do, on some occasions, force themselves upon the mind ; but on other occasions the mind must be in a manner forced open to give them free and full admision.

L E T T E R IV.

IT is true, that our knowledge and belief of primary truths is originally derived from experience ; from whence we necessarily derive every other kind of knowledge and belief whatever. But you will please to remember, that I do not found our belief of primary truths on experience alone : for experience alone doth not produce certainty. What hath been, may be, can be affirmed with great certainty,

tainty, if we have not some particular
 cause to suspect the contrary : but what
 hath been, will be, cannot be affirmed
 with any degree of certainty, without
 founding our expectation on some fixed
 cause sufficient to produce the expected
 event. The unthinking part of mankind
 are often governed solely by experience,
 in much the same manner as children
 and idiots ; but men of understanding
 search for a more firm foundation for
 their faith. In natural philosophy, the
 learned do not rest in the knowledge of
 effects produced by experiment, if they
 can discover the law in nature by which
 these effects are produced ; nor do they
 found expectations on experiment alone,
 however often repeated, with the same
 certainty with which they rely upon the
 law in nature which they discover by ex-
 periment. Physicians are often obliged
 to proceed merely on experience, with-
 out being able to reach the law in nature
 which produces the changes they observe,
 but never with that assurance with which
 they proceed on the well-known causes
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of health and sickness, of life and death. Statesmen and lawgivers pay great regard to experience, but endeavour all they can to found their plans of government on well-known laws in nature. The vulgar are not accurate reasoners, and yet you will find that they do not chuse to rest in experience alone. You will think that a peasant believes, that lead will sink, and cork will swim, in water, merely because he hath known it do so often : but you may find yourself mistaken ; for though he does not know the laws of hydrostatics, he has the notion of some fixed law in nature which produces those effects, and on which he founds his belief : nor will he believe that cork may sink, or lead swim, without a power sufficient to alter or counteract this law. The meanest of the vulgar will tell you, that if a dog hath once or twice bit a passenger, you ought to keep out of his way, because he may bite you. If he has again and again bit passengers, you ought by all means to be on your guard, because it is probable he will bite you.

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And if he has taken every occasion of biting passengers, they will tell you, that he will certainly bite you ; and for this reason, that he is an ill-natured cur, and disposed to bite every one he sees. Thus do the vulgar distinguish, with great accuracy, between what may be, what probably will be, and what certainly will come to pass : and thus do they with great judgment found certainty on an established law in nature. Is there not here just ground of complaint against the learned, for overlooking distinctions which seldom escape the observation of the vulgar, and thereby exposing religion to objections which would be rejected with disdain on any other subject ? Should one tell a man of plain understanding, that though the dog bit one or two passengers, there was no ground to suspect that he would bite a third ; or though he had often bit passengers, there was no probability that he would do the same again ; or even though he bit on every occasion, there was not ground sufficient to conclude, that he had a fixed disposition

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disposition to bite :—I say, if one would entertain a man of plain understanding with such paradoxes as these, he would know how to judge of him : And yet you seem to blame me for endeavouring to prove those to be fools, who, from an affectation of appearing wiser than their neighbours, pretend to doubt of truths every whit as evident as the bad disposition of the dog who bites on every occasion.

L E T T E R V.

PRobability does indeed, in some instances, make near approaches to, but never reaches certainty. The difference is small, but real, and may be pointed out in all the different sciences. The primary truths of all the sciences have absolute evidence. Truths derived from them, and on that account called *secondary*, may have evidence sufficient, and more than sufficient, to convince the judgment, and determine the will ; but
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some singular cases, which will be mentioned, being excepted, they have not that full, complete, and absolute evidence, which belongs to primary truths. A few examples from the different sciences will put this matter in its true light.

Civil judges do pass sentence even in complex cases, of the justice of which neither they, nor any other who knows the subject, can have a reasonable doubt : but I am persuaded, that on due consideration, the judges themselves would allow, that their sentence hath not the evidence which belongs to the maxims of equity or of law on which they are founded. The ablest physician, or body of physicians, who give the closest attendance on a patient, with the strictest attention to the symptoms of his distemper, and who prescribe with the utmost regard to the rules of their profession, will acknowledge, that the justness of their prescription neither hath, nor can have, the same evidence with the well-known laws of nature on which it is founded. In mathematics, deductions
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are shorter, more simple, and clear, and therefore more certain than in any other science. A mathematician hath almost the same absolute evidence for the proposition he has demonstrated, that he hath for the primary truths from which he hath deduced it. But one may commit an oversight or mistake even in mathematical demonstration. No operation is more simple, more frequently practised, or better understood, than that of summing up accounts by the rules of addition; and yet the most perfect accountant will revise his account, and affirm its justness with the exception of errors. In theology and ethics, one may, with a degree of probability approaching near to certainty, fix in given circumstances the portion of time which ought to be employed in devotion, the portion of money that ought to be given in alms, the degree of condescension and submission due to an offended brother; but not with that absolute evidence which belongs to these truths: We ought to worship God; We ought to give alms to the poor; and,

We ought to procure a reconciliation with an offended brother. Nor can one who gives the strictest attention to himself, affirm his having fulfilled those duties with the same certainty with which he affirms his obligation to fulfil them. Some secondary truths in theology and ethics, have a degree of evidence exceeding what belongs to most other truths of the same rank; because in discovering them the actor is a witness to himself, or his conscience bears witness to him of the honesty of his intentions and endeavours, which is the principal thing in religious and moral actions; but it may be doubted whether, with the benefit of this testimony, one can arrive at a degree of certainty concerning his religious and moral actions equal to that which belongs to the primary truths of religion and morality. We find, that the holy persons recorded in scripture spoke with great assurance to God himself of their uprightness and integrity; but it is worthy of notice, that one of the chief of them mixes a kind of modest distrust of his

his own judgment, with the assertion of his innocence, in these words: "I know
 " nothing by myself, yet am I not here-
 " by justified; but he that judgeth me
 " is the Lord." Good men have evidence of their integrity in the discharge of the various duties of life, sufficient to support them under disasters, and under the horrors of death, and to enable them to quit life, and launch into eternity, not only with composure, but sometimes also with joy and triumph; but still it may be doubted whether the evidence, great as it may be, is equal to that which belongs to those truths on which they found their hopes. It may approach near, but cannot come fully up to it.

You see now, that there is a real difference, however small it may be in some cases, between the evidence of primary and secondary truths. The one is absolute; the other is not. The one admits the possibility of mistake; the other does not. The one is best but a high degree of probability; the other is certainty. And you see at the same time, that the

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different evidence arises from the different nature of the truths. One is an object of intuition; and therefore, if there is no defect in the faculty by which you perceive, or the medium through which you perceive those truths, there can be no possible ground of doubt. The other is a subject of reasoning, in which you are always more or less liable to mistake, through a variety of causes needless to be enumerated, let your faculty of perception be ever so perfect, and your medium ever so clear.

There is, however, a certain number of secondary truths that I promised to mention, which have evidence that does not fall short of that which belongs to primary truths, and may therefore, with great propriety, be called absolute. That this paper will be destroyed on being put in the fire, is a secondary truth deducible by the rules of logic from this primary truth, Fire has a power to consume combustibles. Nevertheless, I can as little doubt of the one as the other. That my body will sink in water, is to me as absolutely

lutely certain as the primary truth in nature from which it is deduced, because I can have as little doubt of the one as of the other. It is needless to mention other truths of the same kind; for you will allow, that there are many. But for your satisfaction and my own, allow me to mention two secondary truths, one of which comes within an hair-breadth of absolute certainty, and the other is at a great distance from it; and both have the highest degree of probability. That death would ensue upon my swallowing sublimate mercury, is, I think, almost, but not absolutely, certain; because there may possibly be some fluid in my constitution which would prove an antidote to the poison: That bread will allay hunger, and refresh and nourish the man who eats it with appetite, is highly probable; but at a great distance from the certainty which belongs to that primary truth. Bread has a nutritive quality; because there may be something in the man's constitution which destroys the nutritive quality of the bread, and may turn it

into poison :—which, by the by, is a good philosophical account of the common practice of asking a blessing on our food.

To a person of less discernment, I would have made a long apology for this detail of obvious facts; but you know how commonly they are overlooked by learned and unlearned, and what endless confusion arises in business and science, from not attending to these things. You know those of good understanding, who never would have run into foolish reasoning, and what is yet more worthy your attention, would not have entered into foolish schemes of business as they do too often, if they had been early taught to distinguish between probability and certainty, and between the various degrees of probability, and how nearly it approaches without ever reaching absolute evidence. And to the same defect in education we must impute the greatest part of the absurdities in theory and practice, which have disgraced religion and morality.

You will say, and I cannot deny, that
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the folly of maintaining secondary, with a zeal of contention, equal, if not superior, to what is shown for primary truths, is to be imputed chiefly to mens pride and selfish passions; but you will allow me, that these passions would not have had such free scope to work the mischief they have wrought, if people had not lost sight of the difference between first and secondary truths, and the different evidence belonging to each. I am extremely glad that we are in some respects wiser than they who came before us: but can you tell me whence it comes to pass, that our celebrated divines and philosophers blunder so grossly in an art to which they are so much devoted? If you will reduce their addresses to mankind on the subject of religion and virtue to a syllogism, you will find them almost always prove the major instead of the minor proposition: for instead of proving to mankind, by a fair enumeration of particulars, how far they do or do not conform to the standard of their duty, you will find them almost perpetually employed in proving,

ving, That they ought to love God, That they ought to do justice to men, or some other such general truths, which no man in his senses doubts of. I allow, that to promote the interests of religion and virtue, it is fit to set the primary truths full in the view of mankind, and that it is necessary to present them again and again to their view; but thousands of mankind will grant you, on the first proposal, all the primary truths of religion and morality, who will not grant, without strict proof, that they come short, as they do, in fulfilling their religious and moral obligations: And I defy you to account to me for men of profound judgment and learning, bestowing so much labour in proving a proposition which will be granted at first sight, and taking so little pains to prove truths which will not be granted without strict and full proof, otherwise than by impugning it to the wretched state in which learning has been for so many ages.

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L E T T E R VI.

IT is not easy to get rid of an opinion which we have early imbibed, and has been rung in our ears from our tender years by those whose judgment we value, and is withal stamped with the authority of an almost uninterrupted succession of philosophers; but if you will put the matter to a trial with the same freedom of thought which every Protestant pretends to in matters of religion, you may be satisfied, that the difference between mathematical axioms and the primary truths of other sciences, is not such as is commonly thought. The principal excellence of mathematical evidence is said to consist in this, that you cannot, if you would, conceive the opposite to a mathematical axiom; whereas you can with ease conceive the opposite to the primary truths of any other science. Now, if by conceiving the opposite to any primary truth is meant your concei-

ving, that the opposite may be true, I affirm it as impossible in all other sciences as in mathematics ; and on this solid foundation, that it is impossible to believe and doubt of the truth of a proposition at one and the same time ; as impossible as to believe that a thing is and is not at the same time. Probable evidence carried to its utmost height does indeed admit a conception of the opposite proposition's being true ; but absolute evidence, whether mathematical, physical, or moral, does not. I will not swallow a draught of poison while I continue in my senses, because I have the probability that it would bring on my death ; but as the evidence, however high, is but of the probable kind, I can with ease conceive the contrary proposition to be true, namely, that the poison possibly might not kill me. But I cannot, if I would, form any such conception of the opposite to a truth of any kind for which I have absolute evidence. As long as the evidence labours under a defect, there is room for doubt ; but

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as soon as it becomes perfect, and absolutely complete, it is beyond all doubt, and it is no longer in your power to suppose the possibility of the contrary's being true, because you cannot suppose a thing to be true and false at one and the same time.

Though I have said enough in my former letter to show the difference between probability and certainty, and between the evidence of first and secondary truths; yet, for your farther satisfaction, I will put the primary truths of all the sciences to a fair trial. When your friend is given up by his physicians, and by all about him, it is probable he will die; when the symptoms of death appear, the probability grows higher; when he turns pale, faint, and motionless, and seems actually to have resigned his breath, we say, that his death is more than probable: but in reality the probability is only at its utmost height; for there is room for the supposition of his not being dead, and of the possibility of his recovery. But if he continue in this state for
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a considerable space of time, and the symptoms of mortification begin to appear, the probability is converted into certainty, and the evidence of his being dead is full, complete, and absolute, and it is no longer in your power to suppose the possibility of his recovery without a miracle. In like manner, when this letter comes to your hand, if you are persuaded, as no doubt you will be, that I was in life when I wrote it, I defy you to admit the least possible conception of my being dead at the same time. Life and death are, in our apprehension, so completely opposite, that it is impossible to admit the least conception of both into our minds at the same time, and concerning the same person. The same may be said of light and darkness, summer and winter, fluidity and cohesion of parts, gravitation, &c.; and, in one word, of all the primary truths of physics, the contrary of which you can no more suppose true, than you can conceive the opposite to a mathematical axiom. If you have full evidence, that the sun is below the

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horizon,

horizon, you cannot suppose him to be above it; if you are satisfied that he is in the tropic of Capricorn, it is not in your power to conceive him in the tropic of Cancer at the same time. If you believe water to be fluid, you cannot conceive the possibility of its being at the same time solid, any more than you can conceive that a triangle should be a square, or a square should be a triangle. Indeed the water that is fluid at present may in a little time become solid, and the ice which is solid at present may soon become fluid; but that either one or other should at one and the same time be fluid and solid, is absolutely inconceivable. So that I cannot perceive the difference so much insisted on, between the evidence which belongs to the axioms of mathematics, and that which belongs to the primary truths of all the other sciences.

That every one ought to have his own, is a proposition as self-evident, and as well intitled to the rank of axioms, as any one in Euclid; and if a man has but as
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much understanding as enables him to give his assent to its truth, I defy him to conceive the possibility that the opposite proposition should be true; that is, I defy any man in his senses to believe the possibility that every one ought and ought not to have his own.

If you will take for granted what I hope to make appear in the second part of this Appeal, I shall go on to make the experiment on the primary truths of religion. Admitting, then, that you are fully satisfied, that it is not only probable in the highest possible degree, but absolutely certain, that we ought to worship and obey God, do you think you could conceive the possibility of our not being under this obligation? Admitting the absolute certainty of an obligation to treat our brethren of mankind with justice, equity, and kindness; can you conceive the possibility of our being at liberty to treat them in an unkind, unfair, unjust manner? And admitting that we are bound to take care of our own interest, by preferring the highest and most
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lasting enjoyment to that which is low and transient, can you conceive us at liberty to prefer that which is trifling and short-lived, to that which is momentous and permanent? These plain truths, with their opposite absurdities, are seldom made an object of attention by the bulk of mankind, and not often presented to them in their naked simplicity and force; but whenever they are, every one of common understanding will, without hesitation, assent to the one as absolutely evident, and reject the other as absolutely false. Just in proportion as a man turns his face to the south, he turns away from the north; and just in proportion as he admits any truth, he turns away his mind from the opposite falsity. Men of weak understanding may veer about like weathercocks, to which they are commonly compared; but as soon as they fix in the belief of any truth, physical, moral, or mathematical, they become incapable of allowing the supposition of the contraries being true.

P. S.

P. S. I had almost forgot to account to you for our having it more in our power to entertain idle conceits in opposition to other primary truths, than to the axioms of mathematics. Be pleased, therefore, to consider, that ideas which have no dependence on or connection with any being in nature, are the subject of mathematical knowledge ; whereas all other sciences have for their subject the powers and qualities of beings which really exist ; and that as all beings whatever, the supreme excepted, are capable of divers and opposite qualities and powers, so it is easy to suppose qualities different from and opposite to what actually exist. But it is not easy, nor indeed possible, to admit an abstract idea different from and opposite to what exists in our minds. It is impossible, for example, to conceive, that black should become white, when black and white are considered in the abstract ; but it is easy to conceive, that the ball which we affirm to be black may become white ; because the matter of which the ball is made,

made, is capable of receiving these different colours. It is impossible to conceive, that a cone, considered in the abstract, should become a cylinder; but it is easy to conceive, that the brass, or any other matter which is now a cone, may become a cylinder. It is impossible to conceive, that 3 should become 6, when the numbers are considered without any reference to a particular subject; but it is easy to conceive, that three pieces of timber, or stone, may be converted into six. It is impossible to conceive, that a man ought not to have his own, when property is not applied to a particular subject; but it is easy to conceive how a man may lose his property in almost any subject; and that therefore he ought not to have the use and enjoyment of it. In short, just conceptions are in a rational mind absolutely immutable; but the subjects on which we employ our conceptions are not; which gives occasion to the mind to feign a change in the subject, by which it imposes on itself. It is impossible to me to conceive, that light should become
darkness,

darkness, or darkness light, or that both should meet in the same subject; but I have no difficulty in conceiving, that the light which fills this chamber at present may disappear, and darkness come into its place; and, if I am so disposed, I might, upon the strength of this imagination, affirm, that the sun does not shine at noon-day, or that we have no greater evidence for its being day than night, because I can conceive the one or the other at pleasure. In theology, ethics, and physics, but not in mathematics, a man may, when he pleases, set up his imagination in opposition to the truth of things; and if he chuses to found his faith rather on the one than the other, you cannot possibly confute him otherwise than by appealing to the remainder of good sense of which he may be possessed, and showing him, that he acts the fool and the madman.

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L E T T E R VII.

YOU seem to think that a sceptic will make light of the charge of folly that I bring against him ; but will he make light of being convicted of folly to himself ? for that is what I aim at. By appealing to common sense, I do not trust the cause of religion to a majority of mankind, or to a certain number of select judges, but to every man of sense, and to the sceptic himself ; who, if he possesses that quality in any tolerable degree, will at length pronounce in favour of religion. Indeed, if a man is destitute of common sense, or if, by disease or otherwise, that characteristical power of the rational mind is so impaired as to render him incapable of distinguishing between obvious truth and palpable absurdity, I do not sustain him a judge. But that, I presume, is not a common case : for as, in the practice of our duty, we often find ourselves urged by opposite affections, and

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may yield to the direction of either as we chuse; so, in judging on plain subjects, true and false sentiments often present themselves to our mind in such a way, as leaves us at liberty to adopt the one or the other as we chuse. Have not you known persons far gone in folly, who still retained so much discernment, that upon some occasions they have caught themselves speaking nonsense, have blushed, and turned silent? I can recollect instances of persons in the beginning of a fever who have told those about them, that they were going to rave, and have actually stopped themselves: and nothing is more common than for those who are getting drunk, to perceive the growing disorder by the nonsense which they utter. If indeed they go on to drink, they will perceive it no longer, but turn downright fools, without the possibility of being made sensible of their disorder.

I always avoid charging those faults on the will which can be fairly placed to the account of the understanding; but cannot help thinking, that sceptics and

infidels might prevent a great deal of that absurdity they run into on the subject of religion: for, certain diseased cases excepted, the progress of folly is gradual; and the person affected may perceive it if he will; or may, in its first approaches, be made sensible of it by the assistance of a friend. And I know no greater friendship that can be done to these people, than to set the difference between sense and nonsense full in their view; and am persuaded, that if this good office had been done to mankind by the friends of religion when the controversy first broke out, we had not only got rid of scepticism long ago, but also would have made a greater proficiency in useful knowledge than we have done: and I would fain hope, that the evil may yet be redressed, by restoring the authority of common sense.

Do not you think that something ought to be done for the honour of literature, and of the age in which we live? for what a shameful thing is it, that we should be found wrangling about first

principles, when discoveries of truths unknown to those who came before us, might in all reason be expected from a people who enjoy our advantages? We laugh at those subtile disputes of the schoolmen, which never could be brought to an issue; but are not aware of a conduct no less ridiculous, in writing volumes of controversy about truths which no man of sense can gainsay.

I know your zeal for freedom of inquiry, and heartily agree with you; but cannot be reconciled to that silly vanity of maintaining either side of a question, by plausible arguments, which you know was first introduced by the ancient sophists; and brought again into reputation by the Popish schoolmen, and is now become the chief faculty of modern sceptics, and not discountenanced in the manner it ought by men of sense and learning.

How often have you and I been disgusted with idle conceits, chimerical suppositions, and monstrous paradoxes, in favourite authors, which they would not
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have had the boldness to offer to the public, if men of learning and judgment had acted with the spirit which became them. Do you think there would be any harm in obliging men of genius to put their opinions to the trial of common sense, before they obtruded them on the unthinking multitude? And if any should, through petulance and presumption, neglect this necessary precaution, would it be any prejudice to the interest of truth, or of freedom of thought, that their gross absurdities or crude conceptions were received by the public with that cold contempt which they are sure to meet with in every circle of men of sense and spirit? I know no right any set of men can have to insult the common sense of mankind; nor do I see any reason why the public should bear with freedoms from writers of any kind, which one man of spirit would not bear with from another.

After all, I am as diffident of my success as you can be, both from a sense of my incapacity to do justice to the subject,

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ject, and a suspicion that mankind chuse either to be entertained with subtile debates, or to give up inquiry altogether: but I hope the public will take in good part this effort I have made, to check a folly which hath retarded the progress of knowledge in all ages, and threatens the present age with a perversion of judgment similar to what prevailed in that period, when, as Mr. Pope says,

*Faith, gospel, all, seem'd made to be disputed;
And none had sense enough to be confuted.*

T H E E N D.





